

# 我的 鸵鸟先生

含 明  
著



浙江最有温度的  
暖爱故事系小天后

含 明

《含明文集》系列作品之一  
《含明文集》系列作品之一  
《含明文集》系列作品之一  
《含明文集》系列作品之一

我相信

你会和我一样，爱上那个叫顾延夕的少年。

顾延夕，那个温暖的，只爱我的，温暖的人，一个少年。

百万读者口碑推荐，绝对值得你熬夜的口福之作！

江苏文艺出版社







# 我的 鸵鸟先生

含 胭  
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晋江最畅销的  
暖爱甜宠系小说

含 胭

晋江文学城签约作者 含胭  
作品多次入选晋江原创网、  
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—— 我相信 ——  
你会和我一样，爱上那个叫顾越兮的少年。

顾越兮，那个阳光的，温暖的你，值得被爱，值得拥有。

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含胭 著



lang="en">

# My Mister Ostrich

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# Prologue

N/A – My Mister Ostrich –

## Prologue

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The plane was late.

Because of the snow.

It was warm and comfortable inside the airport, but outside, a big snowstorm was falling.

Pang Qian was wrapped in a big coat, standing in front of the glass, watching as snow piled onto the tarmac. The endless snow, caught in the wind, fell to the ground. Against the dim lights, everything looked a bit fuzzy.

The airport staff were driving cars back and forth, transporting luggage and clearing off the snow. Pang Qian lifted her wrist to check her watch. It was already 8 PM. Originally, she should have landed in E City by now.

The gate door was closed, and there were no staff present. Half an hour earlier, someone had come to distribute some meal boxes and mineral water. Pang Qian and a bunch of anxious passengers lined up to get one. After she hurriedly finished eating, she began to wonder about the actual chances of getting home that night.

She traveled up north for a business trip on her own, in this cold season, to an icy and snow-filled city. Pang Qian was eager to return home. She'd already been here for two weeks. For an easily homesick girl, it really was long enough.

Still, no one had come to inform them if the plane would be able to take off. Pang Qian sat down in a chair and took a look at the people around her. There was an elderly man who had already fallen asleep in his chair. Next to him was a young mother, coaxing the crying baby in her arms. On the other side, there was a pair of lovers sitting close together, each with one headphone in their ear, watching and laughing at a video on their iPad. A well-dressed middle-aged man



sat beside them, still as a monk in meditation...

A phone rang, and Pang Qian answered. It was her mom, Jin Ai'hua, calling.

Pang Qian told her that the plan was late, and she wasn't sure if she'd make it home that night.

She said, "It's snowing a lot here. Right now, they haven't told us anything."

Jin Ai'hua said, "Then I'll tell Xiao Yu to go home. He's been waiting for your call for a long time. He wanted to pick you up at the airport."

Pang Qian furrowed her brows, "Why is he there again? Hurry and tell him to go home. If the plane flies tonight, I can just take the bus home on my own."

When she hung up, Pang Qian decided to take a walk around. She'd already been waiting at the airport for several hours, and it was indeed rather boring.

After visiting a few souvenir and apparel shops, Pang Qian went into a bookstore. The airport bookstore didn't really excite her. There were a lot of biographies, some books on economic tips, travel guides... Pang Qian looked over book after book without interest, when out of the corner of her eye, she spotted a book that seemed to be a best-seller.

It was an illustrated book. Normal 16 *kai* paper (standard book size), medium thickness, beautifully printed. The cover had a ring of green leaves, drawn with a lot of detail. In the center of the ring was a tiny crab on the back of a small ostrich.

The crab was red, and the ostrich was brown. You could see the slightest trace of feathers on its body. Its eyes were gentle and clear but dark. The crab was huddled inside its claws, sleeping soundly.

The title of the book was "My Miss Crab."

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Pang Qian involuntarily picked up the book. It was wrapped in plastic, and it wasn't cheap.

Pang Qian found the author— Mister Ostrich.

A strange name, but it made her heart beat faster.



She took the book to the counter to pay, her hand slightly shaking.

When she returned to the boarding gate, she found that the other passengers had all gathered together. It was an airport staff member who was here to make an announcement. All flights tonight were cancelled because of the heavy snow. As for when they would be resumed, that depended on the weather.

The staff member apologized and asked us to contact the airline to arrange a refund or to change our tickets. Travelers needing to stay longer could arrange for a hotel downtown. Travelers wishing to take the train could arrange tickets at the train station.

Pang Qian stood to the side, watching as some unhappy travelers started quarreling with the airport staff. She pulled her coat tighter, feeling at a bit of a loss.

At 11 PM, Pang Qian finally arranged a hotel to stay at. The hotel was very simple, but they had arranged a single room for her. It had full amenities and the heating was very comfortable. She had no complaints.

After washing up, she got into bed. Using the orange light from the head of the bed, she finally opened the illustrated book.

Feeling the smooth cover, Pang Qian looked again at the small ostrich and crab. After she settled down, she opened the book.

N/A – My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 1

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again

### 1 Childhood Friends

*You're talking about me? Look at how slow you are when you put your shoes on!*

---

In my memory, there was also a snowstorm such as this. It was the winter of 1995, and the snow was especially heavy. The news said that this was the biggest snowstorm that hit E City in the past 30 years, warning residents to pay attention to their safety and be careful when traveling.

That morning, 10 year old Pang Qian was under the warmth of her covers, refusing to get up. Her mother, Jin Ai'hua, called her many times, but she pretended not to hear. Jin Ai'hua saw that the breakfast was getting cold, so she angrily entered Pang Qian's room and tore away the covers. The little girl's legs were now exposed to the cold air. Freezing cold, she jumped out of bed like a grasshopper.

"Freezing to death!"

Jin Ai'hua didn't quit. With a swish, she pulled open the room curtains, saying, "Look at the weather today. If you don't hurry, you and Mingxin will both be late!"

Pang Qian's eyes shone, and no longer caring about the cold, landed in front of the window. Seeing the feather-like snow outside, she stared in surprise, "Yeah! It's snowing! It's snowing a lot!"

After she finished eating, Pang Qian went out the door, but didn't go downstairs. Instead, she went over to 502 across the hall and knocked.

After just two knocks, the door opened. A hair-covered head appeared. He furrowed his brow and with an unhappy face, "You're getting later and later. It'll be slippery today, so the road will be hard to walk on. If you're ever late again,



I'm not going to wait for you."

Pang Qian pouted, watching as he put on his shoes while sitting on a stool. After a moment, she grumbled, "You're talking about me? Look at how slow you are when you put your shoes on!"

The boy lifted his head to glance at her. He pursed his lips without saying anything, and lowered his head, continuing to put his shoes on.

Pang Qian's mouth twitched. Then she crouched down in front of him, and helped him with his right shoe that wouldn't go on his foot.

"Are you done?" she asked.

"Mm," the boy nodded.

He stood up, and Pang Qian helped him put his backpack on. His mom, Li Han, came out from the kitchen and smiled after seeing Pang Qian. She said to her son, "Mingxi, it's snowing a lot today and the roads are slippery. Why don't I take you to school?"

The 11 year old Gu Mingxi shook his head, "I can go by myself. I'll just walk slowly."

Li Han looked out at the heavy snow outside, feeling very worried. Gu Mingxi said indifferently, "Mom, help me put on my raincoat."

Li Han fetched his wool hat and scarf, carefully helping him put them on. Then she helped him put on his raincoat. To stop the hood on the raincoat from covering his eyes, she also clipped it near his neck to fix it.

"Qian Qian, walk slowly on the road. Take care of Mingxi," Li Han asked of Pang Qian. Pang Qian nodded, "I know, Auntie."

Now that everyone was set, the two kids ran out the door and down the stairs. Li Han was still at their apartment door, shouting after them, "Mingxi! Remember to be careful!"

"I know—" The boy's clear and crisp voice floated up the corridor, excitement audible in his voice.

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After going out the front door, Pang Qian opened up her umbrella, cheered



and ran into the snow. She wore a red cotton jacket. Inside, she wore a cotton sweater, a wool vest, a thick granny jacket (?), and a knitted shirt. She was wrapped up like a ball. She also wore a hat and gloves, so she didn't feel even a little cold.

"Aiya, the ground's really slippery." Pang Qian had never seen such a large snowfall before, so she was particularly excited. Her little face grew flushed from the cold wind. She found a few ice-covered spots, cried out, and slid across. It was as fun as ice skating.

Gu Mingxi walked steadily beside her. He had on a green raincoat. It was very long and covered his knees. The back was also raised up by his backpack, making him look like a big *zongzi*. Without stopping his pace, he reminded Pang Qian, "Be careful, don't walk on the ice."

*Zongzi, sometimes rice dumping, is made of glutinous rice, filled with any assortment of things, and wrapped in bamboo leaves. I'm used to savory fillings like meat and beans, but they can also have something sweet, like red bean paste, inside.*

"I got it. You're so annoying." Pang Qian slid along the ice a bit more, and then extended her hands to catch snowflakes. She even went off to the side of the road and left a hand print in the pile of snow. It was clean and soft. She pulled off her glove and pressed her hand down, until her right hand turned red from the cold.

"Stop playing." Gu Mingxi had gotten up first and was waiting for her. Seeing her playing without care, he finally couldn't hold back, "Hurry up. We'll be late."

"Let's play a little more." Pang Qian wasn't one of those good kids who listened to what others told her. She picked up a handful of fluffy snow. The more she looked at it, the more it looked like ice cream. She couldn't stop herself and took a bit, then shuddered, saying, "It's so cold. It doesn't taste like anything."

Gu Mingxi was speechless. "Of course there's no taste. Did you think it would be sweet?"

Pang Qian turned to look at him, and suddenly threw the snow in her hand at him. With a "puff," it landed on the front of Gu Mingxi's raincoat.



“Hey!” Gu Mingxi jumped back. Under his hat, his raincoat was pulled tightly. Only his face could be seen. And tucked under his chin, there was also a clip. The snow particles flying around stuck onto his eyebrows and eyelashes, and then soon melted from the heat of his body. His eyes were bright and clear, but they carried a bit of unhappiness. The corners of his lips drooped down. But Pang Qian wasn’t afraid that he’d get angry. She just laughed hahaha, and swept the snow from her hands. Then suddenly, she put her ice-cold hand onto Gu Mingxi’s face.

“Pang Qian!” The boy twisted away, avoiding her, and walked off with a huff. He didn’t expect to step on some ice, and in a flash, before Pang Qian could pull him back, he had already fallen to the ground.

At this moment, Pang Qian couldn’t even laugh. She dropped her umbrella and quickly rushed over to help Gu Mingxi up. She also didn’t dare to apologize. She just looked at him with some apprehension, then helped him clean off his raincoat. Gu Mingxi got up and took two steps, then turned around and saw Pang Qian’s upset and nervous face. Earnestly, he said, “Okay, I won’t tell my mom.”

Pang Qian immediately started smiling, relief flooding her face. She asked, “Did your fall hurt?”

“What do you think,” Gu Mingxi glared at her.

“Where does it hurt?” She looked him over, helping him brush off the snow from his coat. With her eyes on him, Gu Mingxi’s face reddened. Stiffly, he said, “It doesn’t hurt. Let’s go, we’re definitely going to be late.”

“Oh.” Pang Qian put on her gloves, not daring to play again, just nodding obediently.

The cold wind whistled in the air, the entire city covered in a sheet of white. Cyclists and pedestrians were all especially careful on the road. Two young kids, pressed between the morning commuters, walked through the snow, stumbling towards their school.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were both fifth graders at Nanlin Intellectual Elementary. They were the same year, in the same class, and they were deskmates. Not only that, their parents were also colleagues and friends. The two families were neighbors. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were childhood friends,



two kids who grew up together.

I'll make a brief point about the term "childhood friends" used here and as the chapter's title. It's used to mean two people who grew up together since childhood, but also often carries an implication that those two people are then also a best match for marriage.

In the 1980s, factory jobs were very popular. It was a secure job. Not only was it easier to find a partner, there was also housing supplied. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua, along with Gu Guoxiang and Li Han, were all employees at a metals company in E City. Pang Shuisheng was a welder. Jin Ai'hua was a cashier. Li Han was a statistician. Gu Guoxiang was one of the few factory workers with a university degree, working as a technician.

Pang Shuisheng and Gu Guoxiang were neighbors. Growing up together since they were young, they were like real brothers. The two of them got married the same year, and happened to get into the factory housing. According to the conditions, Gu Guoxiang got a 3-bedroom house. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua, who were also both working parents, only got a 2-bedroom house. Because Gu Guoxiang was on good terms with the manager, he was smart and his mouth was sweet, he was able to help Pang Shuisheng get a 3-bedroom house. He and his wife were so grateful for this kindness, and they would always remember it.

The factory had four buildings of housing. It was near the factory, surrounded by walls, and it was called the Golden Compound. The winter before Gu Mingxi was born, the Gu and Pang families happily moved into the recently built small building. What's more, they were neighbors on the same floor. The north and south facing 3-bedrooms on the 5th floor. The Pang's were in 501, the Gu's in 502. Their doors were across from each other. Their balconies were adjacent. When it was sunny outside, the south facing house would be bathed in sunlight.

At that time, Gu Guoxiang and Pang Shuisheng were both young. They were hardworking, blessed with marital harmony, their parents were healthy, and they lived in a building that was the envy of many. Each and every day, they walked happily with a smile into their homes. They were just like any other regular couples in the city, living their ordinary, cozy lives.

In the summer of 1984, Gu Guoxiang and Li Han had a son, Mingxi. The end of



the year was the end of Jin Ai'hua's pregnancy, and both families were at the peaks of happiness. Gu Mingxi's (paternal) grandmother had looked at Jin Ai'hua's big belly and smiled, saying, "Ai'hua's baby is a girl. How perfect, she can be betrothed to our Mingxi. Really, what a perfect match (between two well-matched families)."

But later, whether it was the Gu family or Pang family, even the other Golden Compound neighbors and colleagues didn't mention this arranged marriage again. The twists and turns that came were something that everyone knew very well.

By the time Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi arrived to school, they were already 20 minutes late. But because of the snowstorm outside, only some more than half the students had arrived. Pang Qian stuck out her tongue, letting out a relieved sigh. And when the head teacher, Teacher Li, saw that Gu Mingxi had arrived, the heavy stone in their heart also dropped (out of relief).

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The students inside were doing their morning reading. Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi take off his raincoat outside the classroom door, then hung it up on the hook on the back of the door. She put her umbrella in the corner, and walked to her seat with Gu Mingxi.

This was the only fixed desk in the fifth grade classroom. Even when seating charts were being rearranged, it wouldn't change. The desk was against the window, in the last row. Pang Qian's father, Pang Shuisheng, had custom ordered it from a carpenter.

The desk was as long as all the other desks, but one side was raised higher, the other lower. The higher side was the same height as other desks, but the lower side was more than 20 cm shorter. Also, all the other students sat on benches. Only Gu Mingxi sat on a chair with a back.

The two kids sat down at the desk. Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi take off his hat and scarf. Then she looked into her backpack to pull out her notebook, not bothering him any longer. Gu Mingxi leaned back in his chair, kicked off his shoes, and rested his feet on the short desk.

He was wearing socks that left the toes open. He grabbed onto his backpack



with his left foot. And with his right, he skillfully unzipped the bag, pulling out the textbooks he needed and his pencil box.

The rest of the class didn't pay any particular attention to him. They continued with their reading and dictation. Teacher Li stood at the lectern, watching over everyone, also not paying much attention to him.

Gu Mingxi's eyes lowered, he looked calm. Sometimes he would whisper things to Pang Qian.

Pang Qian worked on her assignments as she absently listened to him. Everything seemed as usual.

Except for Gu Mingxi's narrow shoulders, where a pair of empty sleeves hung in the air.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 2

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 2 Nine *Jin* Girl

*Who told you to have the last name Pang? Should I just call you Pang Pang in the future?*

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The bell rang, and Pang Qian couldn't sit still any longer. Wang Tingting turned around and shouted, "Crab (*pangxie*), come out to play in the snow!"

"Crab" was Pang Qian's nickname. In her class, everyone aside from Gu Mingxi called her that.

Then what did Gu Mingxi call her? Did he call her by her given name?

Of course not.

Pang Qian pushed away her books hurriedly. Then she jumped up and ran out after Wang Tingting. Then she suddenly thought of something, and turned back to ask Gu Mingxi, "Do you want to come with?"

Gu Mingxi was seated at his desk the whole time. He turned to look outside the window, then looked over at Pang Qian. In the end, he shook his head, "I'm not going."

Pang Qian laughed to him, then ran out of the classroom, holding hands with Wang Tingting.

E City counted as being in the south. Although every winter had snow, it was usually a rain-snow mix. It would fall for a few hours, but not even a few cm of snow would accumulate. For adults, a big snowstorm as this caused them to worry about food prices and slippery ice. But for kids, this was really a chance in a lifetime.

There were only 10 minutes between classes, but nearly the entire student



body had gone out to the playground. They ran around and played, full of merriment, having a snowball fight. Pang Qian led the girls and some boys into battle. Balls of snow went flying. Everyone's clothes and hands got all wet, but no one minded.

Gu Mingxi stood at the window, looking down at the playground the whole time. Unconsciously, he searched around for his classmate amidst the kids. And he easily spotted Pang Qian from the group.

Her clothes were eye-catchingly red, and she ran with great vigor. Even from so far away, Gu Mingxi could actually hear her laughter.

It was time for class again, and the students all reluctantly returned to class.

Out of breath, Pang Qian sat down next to Gu Mingxi. Her braids were wet, and her cheeks were flushed. She had a sly look to her expression. Gu Mingxi asked her, "Was it fun?"

"Not fun. The snow was really muddy, it was all dark." Pang Qian blinked, and said, "I wanted to make a snowman, but there wasn't any snow. Everyone used it all to play."

"Oh." Gu Mingxi saw Pang Qian lower her head, but didn't know what she was doing. Curious, he asked, "What are you doing?"

Pang Qian suddenly reached out her hand. Just as the teacher walked into the classroom, she threw the ice balls in her hand at Gu Mingxi.

With nowhere to hide, Gu Mingxi took the hit straight on.

In a flash, he stood up on the ground, barefoot. His chair was knocked over with a bam. The teacher who was speaking jumped in fright. All the students turned back and looked at them with surprise.

Pang Qian covered her mouth and laid on the table, laughing. Gu Mingxi stood beside the desk, expressionless and in a daze for a moment. Then he pulled his chair back up with his foot and took a seat, as if nothing had happened.

The class turned back around, and the teacher started class.

There was still a trace of ice on Gu Mingxi's forehead. After they melted, the ice water ran down his cheeks. But he didn't pay any attention to it. He just bent



his body and opened his book with his foot. His right foot picked up his pen.

After awhile, Pang Qian started pulling at his sleeve, but he ignored her. Pang Qian used her pen to poke his waist, his back, and even his left thigh. Gu Mingxi tried twisting away, but couldn't avoid her. He turned and glared at her, whispering, "Stop messing around."

Pang Qian pursed her lips, withdrawing her pen. She muttered, "So petty."

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When school was over, the snow had already stopped. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went home together.

After passing through the gates to the metals factory, Gu Mingxi spotted a patch of thick snow that hadn't been plowed away.

He called out to Pang Qian, who was swaying about ahead, "Didn't you say you wanted to build a snowman? You can build one here."

Pang Qian turned around and looked for a moment, "Forget it. It's no fun to play by myself. There's no point."

Gu Mingxi said unhappily, "I'm not a person?!"

Pang Qian never hesitated when speaking to him. "You don't have arms, how can you build it?"

Unsatisfied with that, Gu Mingxi said, "I can build it with my legs!"

Having said that, he'd already headed over to the snow pile.

He was wearing a beige colored cotton jacket, his backpack on his back, two empty cotton sleeves swinging on either side of him. Behind him, Pang Qian stood watching him. Gu Mingxi suddenly turned around and shouted, "Come on! Fattie, are you going to build or not?"

Pang Qian's hair frizzled. Stomping on the ground, "I told you not to call me Fattie!"

Gu Mingxi's mouth turned up, his smile revealing two small teeth. He said, "I'll call you if I want to. Fattie, Fattie, Fattie..."

Pang Qian ran after him with chagrin, as if wanting to hit him. Gu Mingxi



turned and ran. The two sleeves at his sides fluttered intensely, just like two little wings. When the two kids neared the pile of snow, Pang Qian reached out and pulled at Gu Mingxi's backpack. He staggered and fell onto the soft snow.

He lay on the ground, facing the sky, his body sunken into the snow. He inhaled the smell of winter surrounding him, and gasped lightly. Pang Qian threw the two backpacks to the side, then stepped onto the flower bed. Like a queen, she condescendingly said to Gu Mingxi, "I'm not fat anymore! You can't call me Fattie!"

Gu Mingxi smiled again, eyes clear and bright. Lazily, he said, "Who told you to have the last name Pang? Should I just call you Pang Pang in the future?"

Her last name is the character *páng* (庞), which sounds like *pàng* (胖), meaning "fat." Gu Mingxi is the only person who calls her Pang Pang, using the word for her last name. In all other instances, I will translate it as "Fattie."

That's right, Pang Qian used to be very fat.

And before the age of 6, Gu Mingxi was a very healthy child.

Not only healthy, he was also smart, beautiful, lively, and loved by all.

This was where he was different from Pang Qian.

On an August afternoon in 1985, the weather was unbearably hot. In the maternity ward of a hospital in E City, Jin Ai'hua spent a day and night in pain, but was still unable to birth her daughter. In the end, she was pulled into the operating room and cut open.

When Pang Shuisheng first saw his daughter, he jumped in shock. The baby girl was rounder than any other child, with a lot of dark hair on her head. Her face was full and glowing. There weren't any wrinkles on her skin at all. She was 51 cm long, 9.8 *jin* (4.9 kg / 10.8 lb), the champion baby of the hospital that month. The nine *jin* girl.

Pang Shuisheng was carrying the baby girl in his arms for a stroll in the hallway, when Gu Guoxiang and his wife came to visit. When Li Han saw the fat baby in Pang Shuisheng's arms, she laughed until her eyes curved. Teasing the baby in her arms who had just turned 1 year old, "Mingxi, Mingxi, look. This is your wife."



Gu Mingxi's eyes widened and glimmered. He looked at the fat baby wrapped in cloth, as if he had seen a fun toy to play with. He laughed as he waved his two arms nonstop.

The nine *jin* girl who had been sleeping suddenly opened her eyes, and opened her mouth wide to yawn. Her nose wrinkled, she tossed her hands and legs. Then she started crying with a cry that could shake the earth.

Gu Mingxi looked questioningly at her. After a moment, he pulled his arm back into his mother's embrace.

Mommy! This wife is really scary! Can we return her?

>O<

Pang Shuisheng gave his nine *jin* daughter the name Pang Qian.

His education only went up to junior high, he wasn't very cultured. He picked the name almost randomly (without much thought), following the names of the time, like Zhang Hong, Chen Lan, Li Juan, Wang Yan. Not at all like the name that Gu Guoxiang and Li Han gave their son, Gu Mingxi. Their son was born on the lunar year's Qixi day, and they added a *ming* to commemorate it. It sounded nice and there was a meaning behind it.

Qixi is a festival on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month. The *xi* (夕) character from Mingxi's name comes from Qixi, and means "dusk" or "evening." The *ming* (铭) character means to inscribe something. Hence, his name is like something commemorating his birth.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both grew up in the Golden Compound. The relationship between the two families grew greater and greater. If one family had urgent matters to attend to, they would just leave their child with the other family for the time.

So regardless of Gu Mingxi's will, he often spent time with Pang Qian.

They ate together, drew together, played together, watched films together, and they even bathed together.

But even if they wore the same open-crotch pants and ate the same rice, it couldn't stop them from growing in two different directions. To put it simply, as



Gu Mingxi grew taller, he grew better looking. And because Pang Qian's base weight was so heavy already, as she grew taller, she grew fatter.

A little girl who was only just 3 years old had become the Golden Compound's fattest child. Her appetite was just too big. She could eat several mantou (buns) for one meal, and she especially loved to eat meat. Add onto it that her last name was Pang, in the compound, she slowly gained the nickname of "Fat Pang." Fat Pang, Fat Pang (páng pàng) eventually just turned into "Fattie" (pàng pàng).

Only Pang Qian's grandparents didn't feel that there was anything to be concerned over. Old folks just thought that a kid that loves to eat was a good thing. But Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua were worried to death, especially because they would see the 4 year old Gu Mingxi across the hall every day.

Gu Mingxi was in kindergarten. He had gotten all the good points of Gu Guoxiang and Li Han's appearance, very pretty and cute. Moreover, he had inherited Gu Guoxiang's smarts, a very clever kid. In school, whether it was singing, dancing, counting, or telling stories, he was always the fastest learner.

Everyone liked Gu Mingxi. He was obedient, smart, polite, and rarely acted naughty. In the Golden Compound, whenever anyone mentioned Gu Guoxiang's son, all they had to say were praises. They all said he would have a very successful future. As for Pang Shuisheng's daughter, people could only shake their heads and sigh.

Pang Qian was greedy, lazy, always causing trouble, and she had a bad temper. Because she was fat, it was hard to buy clothes for her. Her family would often re-purpose their old clothes for her. That meant that she rarely had new clothes to wear, let alone pretty dresses. So the ugly and fat Pang Qian slowly became the loneliest child in the Golden Compound.

Only Gu Mingxi was willing to play with her.

Obviously, Pang Qian really liked Gu Mingxi. Little kids, you know, they all like to play with older kids. Moreover, Gu Mingxi was beautiful and smart. But to be honest, Gu Mingxi wasn't exactly close to Pang Qian.

Li Han always said, "Mingxi, Qian Qian's your little sister. You can't bully her, you have to take her with you to play."



This caused Gu Mingxi great distress. It wasn't because he didn't want to play with her, but rather, the other kids in the Golden Compound were all unwilling to play with her.

So, when Gu Mingxi was ordered to take Pang Qian down to play, what you would usually see is a group of 4 and 5 year olds following him around to play. And Pang Qian would be sitting by the flowerbed, waiting for him.

She was too lazy to run, and she couldn't run.

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Outside the Golden Compound, there was a big piece of land, with a big flower garden. There was also a camphor tree planted there. To the right of that land, there was a small bicycle shed. At the edge, there was a small house, and an old 60 something year old man lived there. His surname was Zeng, and he was a retired employee of the metal company. He'd never been married in his lifetime. After he retired, he applied to be the gatekeeper for the Golden Compound.

Old Zeng lived by himself, so his meals were rather simple. He had a briquette stove set up at the door of his house and made a pot of stew. Inside, he would add chicken feet, eggs, chicken wings, and chicken gizzards. After it was done, he'd have enough to eat for several days.

The fragrance of the stew would get carried through the wind, and Pang Qian would smell this as she sat by herself. Finally, one day, she walked over to Old Zeng's house, and saw the delicious pot of bubbling stew on the briquette stove.

Old Zeng knew all the people in the compound, so naturally, he recognized Pang Qian. Seeing the saliva nearly dripping from the fat child's mouth, he scooped out an egg from the stew and gave it to her. Afraid she might get scalded, he even wrapped it up with paper.

Pang Qian was very happy, grabbing onto the egg with two little hands, carrying it back to the flower garden as if it were some kind of treasure. The egg was very hot and fragrant, so she couldn't eat it. She sat there, and from time to time, she would poke the egg, licking her lips to moisten them before swallowing her saliva.

Her odd behavior attracted the attention of two 6 or 7 year old kids. They were Zhang Jiaqi and Fu Liang. They ran over to Pang Qian's side, and quickly saw the



egg that she held in her hands.

The two boys became greedy. Zhang Jiaqi picked a flower from the garden and held it in front of Pang Qian, saying, “Fattie, I’ll give you this, and you give me that egg.”

Pang Qian looked at him, and without saying anything, tightened her hold on the egg.

Fu Liang held out his Sun Wukong (Monkey King) toy to give to Pang Qian. “I’ll let you borrow my toy, give your egg to me.”

Pang Qian glanced around and then shook his head.

Since their exchanges were unsuccessful, they could only resort to intimidation. Zhang Jiaqi said, “Fattie, if you don’t give that egg to me, then I’m going to tell your parents that you stole Grandpa Zeng’s egg!”

Pang Qian anxiously replied, “I didn’t steal!”

Fu Liang made a face at her. “You did steal it!”

He and Zhang Jiaqi wiggled their butts and started to sing loudly the song that the children in the compound had made up. “Fattie is a big, fat pig. She eats three bowls of rice at every meal! Fattie’s butt is as big as a washbasin. When she walks, she’s like a waddling duck! Fattie’s farts are really smelly that it killed the village’s cow!”

Pang Qian held onto her egg tightly with both hands, glowering at the two of them.

When they finished singing, Zhang Jiaqi stuck his butt out at Fu Liang, and made a “pu” sound. Fu Liang pretended like he was being suffocated by a smelly fart and leapt up.

They both laughed. Pang Qian finally couldn’t hold back her tears.

She wiped away her tears as she wanted to get up to go home, but Zhang Jiaqi and Fu Liang wouldn’t let her go. They closed in on her, wanting to steal her egg. Pang Qian suddenly was also angry and went to blows with them.

That was the scene that Gu Mingxi saw as he returned to the compound with a group of kids. He dropped the branches in his hands, and rushed over without



hesitation. With force, he pulled away Fu Liang who was grabbing onto Pang Qian's braids.

Zhang Jiaqi and Fu Liang didn't think much about the 5 year old Gu Mingxi. He wanted to help Fattie? Then they'd beat him up!

How could two kindergartners beat two kids in elementary school? The egg in Pang Qian's hands finally fell to the ground, and her piercing scream brought Old Zeng over to them. He sent the two big kids away, and dispersed the group of younger kids. And finally, he helped the beaten-up Gu Mingxi, who was sprawled on the ground, get on his feet.

Squatting next to the broken egg, Pang Qian became more and more distressed, her crying louder and louder. Gu Mingxi looked down at his torn up sleeves and then looked over at Pang Qian, whose braids had been pulled all over. And then he reached out his hand to her, "Fattie, stop crying. I'll take you home."

After crying a bit more, Pang Qian finally stood up, sniffing, and held on tightly to Gu Mingxi's hand.

In Pang Qian's memories, this was one of the few times that she and Gu Mingxi held hands. Most of time, she was the one to grab onto his hand, and he was the one to pull away. The Gu Mingxi back then was very proud and reserved. He received the favor of all the girls in kindergarten. He was like a shining prince, so it wasn't so easy for him to be won over.

But at the time, neither of them would have thought that in the future, once he would want to hold her hand, he would be powerless to do so.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 3

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again

### 3 The Walls Have Ears

*I also don't think that I have anything to be ashamed of. Really.*

---

Gu Mingxi really took off his shoes and helped Pang Qian build a snowman.

Pang Qian was in charge of gathering the snow and Gu Mingxi was in charge of building it. He sat on the snow-covered ground, leaning back, forming a "V" with his upper body and legs. Lifting his two legs, he kept pressing the snow that Pang Qian tossed over. Gradually, the snowman's form was shaped out by him. It just wasn't very tall, kind of cone-shaped.

When they were making the head, he stood up. He stood on his left leg, and used his right leg to help Pang Qian round out the head. Sometimes his foot would touch her hand. And while Pang Qian could call out, "Move your stinking feet!" Gu Mingxi knew that she didn't really mind.

After some hard work, they finally had a snowman that was only as tall as their waist. Pang Qian brushed off her hands as curled her lips in disdain. "It's so ugly."

The snowman was indeed ugly. Two leaves as eyes, a tree branch as a nose. Even the head was drooping. Gu Mingxi stood beside Pang Qian, moved his shoulders, and didn't have any ideas either. Interest lost, Pang Qian rubbed her hands dry on her clothes. Then she picked up both of their bags and said, "Let's go home. I'm tired /bored."

Gu Mingxi blinked and opened his mouth, but didn't say anything. Then he sat down and started putting on his socks and shoes.

Pang Qian didn't know that because he'd sat on the ground for a long time, his pants were soaked with ice water. And right now, it was bitter cold. And also,



because he had stepped on the snow with his bare feet, his feet were now numb from the cold. They were all red and he couldn't feel the tips of his toes.

Pang Qian was swaying on the side when she heard Gu Mingxi call, "Pang Pang!"

She turned around and glared at him, "Don't call me Fattie!"

"Not Fattie, Pang Pang." Gu Mingxi said softly, "Come over and help me. My toes are frozen, so I can't get my shoes on."

Pang Qian heard bad cry in her heart. She dropped the backpacks and ran over to him. Seeing his wet pants and red feet, she nearly cried. "Oh no! Your mom will definitely tell my mom, and then my mom's going to beat me to death!"

Gu Mingxi, "..."

With a bitter face, Pang Qian crouched down to help him with his socks and shoes. After realizing his socks were wet, she wanted to cry even more. After staying silent for a moment, Gu Mingxi said, "I just won't tell my mom. Don't worry."

"Then if your mom asks you why your pants are wet, what are you going to say?"

Gu Mingxi seriously thought for a moment, then said, "Why don't I say I fell on the way home?"

"If you fell, your mom will still tell my mom! And then she'll beat me just the same!"

Seeing Pang Qian crying out from worry, Gu Mingxi, who had put on his shoes, got up slowly. He said, "Alright, I promise I won't tell my mom. Okay?"

"Really?" Pang Qian tilted her head to look at him.

"Really," Gu Mingxi walked to her side, and pushed her slightly with his shoulder. "Let's go home. It will be dark soon."

"Oh!"

The two kids put on their backpacks. Leaving the ugly snowman behind, they walked back to the Golden Compound.



When they arrived, they ran into Gu Guoxiang, who had just finished work.

He parked his bike(?) in the bike shed, and was heading out with his briefcase, when he saw Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi who had just come in.

“Dad.”

“Uncle.”

The two kids shouted to him, and Gu Guoxiang walked calmly over to them. He reached out and gave Gu Mingxi’s shoulder a pat, “Finished school?”

“Mm,” Gu Mingxi nodded, and walked up with his dad.

Gu Guoxiang was 38 years old this year. Tall and thin, with a handsome face and a head full of dark hair, and wearing glasses, he was the very image of an intellectual.

Walking through the corridor, Gu Mingxi walked in front, with Gu Guoxiang in the middle, and Pang Qian in the rear. From the first floor all the way to the fifth, Gu Mingxi and Gu Guoxiang didn’t say anything to each other. Gu Mingxi’s steps were particularly steady, two empty sleeves hanging at his sides. He wasn’t at all like he usually was with Pang Qian, hopping up the steps.

Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi was a bit scared of his father. Although in Pang Qian’s eyes, Gu Guoxiang was a very warm and courteous person. He never shouted, and never scolded and beat like her parents did to her when she was naughty. Moreover, Gu Guoxiang was payed higher wages. Gu Mingxi’s food, clothes, and toys were all better than hers. Pang Qian envied Gu Mingxi for having such an outstanding father, so she didn’t understand why Gu Mingxi was so reserved around him.

She always felt that you should be able to act wildly in front of your own father.

When they arrived on the fifth floor, Gu Guoxiang suddenly asked, “Mingxi, why are your pants wet?”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Scared, Pang Qian said, “Goodbye, Uncle,” before opening the door with her keys and walking inside her home.



Gu Guoxiang opened the door to 502. Li Han heard the sound and came out, smiling, “Hey, how did you two come in together?”

“We met downstairs.” Gu Guoxiang handed his bag to Li Han, then took off his coat. He saw his son sitting on the stool, taking off his shoes. He walked over and felt his pants. They were very wet. As he felt down, he (dad) came to his (Mingxi’s) wet and cold feet.

He lowered his voice and asked, “Did you pee your pants?”

“No!” Gu Mingxi quickly shook his head. In a low voice, he said, “Dad, this is water, snow water from outside. I was playing with Pang Qian in the snow, and got my pants wet.”

Gu Guoxiang pondered for a moment, then said, “First go change your pants. You’ll catch a cold like this.”

“Oh,” Gu Mingxi nodded and obediently followed his dad to his room. He added, “Dad, I’m sorry. I’ll pay more attention next time. Can you please not tell Mom?”

Gu Guoxiang turned to look at him. Finally, he tousled his own hair and nodded.

When it was time for dinner, Gu Mingxi sat in his chair as Li Han helped place a basin of water by his feet. He washed his feet on his own. And then Li Han gave him rice, handed him chopsticks, and went to drain the basin.

Gu Guoxiang sat at the table the whole time, his eyes watching everything with a complicated expression.

Gu Mingxi used his right foot to eat. His family’s dinner table was custom made, and was shorter than most dinner tables. Gu Mingxi rested his right foot on the table and bent his body over. His chopsticks were tucked between his toes, and he pushed the rice into his mouth. Li Han would add food into his bowl from time to time, and she even helped him get a bowl of soup.

Gu Guoxiang didn’t say anything at the start, until Li Han helped their son to peel some shrimp. Gu Guoxiang finally said, “There are some things you should tell Mingxi to do by himself.”



Li Han stared blankly, and Gu Mingxi also lifted his head to look over at his father.

“I know that getting rice and soup, and carrying a washbasin are harder to do. But things like peeling shrimp, adding more food to his bowl... He can't rely on someone for the rest of his life. He should learn to do things on his own.” Gu Guoxiang ate as he spoke. “Mingxi is still young, but he'll grow up. He has to go to college, has to find a job, to find a partner. When we're no longer there, will he no longer have food to eat? Ah Han, are you planning to take care of him for the rest of his life?”

Gu Mingxi shrugged, and then lowered his head to continue eating. His long and thick eyelashes were downcast, his gaze fixed on the bowl of rice in front of him.

Li Han was silent for a moment. “Slowly. We're not in a rush. Mingxi's making very good progress now. On hot days, he learned to put on his own clothes. He's only 11 years old, don't ask too much of him.”

Gu Guoxiang looked at her and then turned to Gu Mingxi. “Mingxi, it's not me who is asking a lot of you, it's this society. The world outside is a very fair place, but it is also a cruel one. You don't have arms. Whether it's studying or finding a job, your starting line is different from others'. If you want to reach the same place that other people can, you'll have to put out many times more effort. If you want to be lazy and live with ease, you'll end up pushed behind everyone else. Forget success, but you might not even have a job. Do you understand?”

Gu Mingxi pressed his lips together tightly, his face was a bit pale. He nodded. Li Han felt her heart breaking. Angrily, she said, “Guoxiang, just eat! Why are you saying these things to him? Our Mingxi is already very hardworking. He's always top 3 in his class, and he draws so well. What is there that you're unsatisfied with?”

Hearing this, Gu Guoxiang suddenly let out a laugh. He shook his head, saying, “Ah... I'm very satisfied with Mingxi, extremely satisfied. Alright? Okay, that's enough. Let's eat.”

He didn't say anything else. Li Han also became silent. Gu Mingxi quietly ate his food. Li Han didn't add any more food to his bowl for him, but he couldn't do it



on his own. So he mostly just swallowed a lot of white rice.

After dinner, Gu Guoxiang recalled that Gu Mingxi had gotten wet with ice water before, so he had Li Han bathe him. Gu Mingxi blushed, and said anxiously, “I don’t need Mom to help me, I can wash on my own.”

In the summer, Gu Mingxi always washed by himself. But in the winter, because he needed to be wiped down, he could only let his parents help. But when his mom helped him, he would still wear shorts. That day, because of Gu Guoxiang’s words at dinner, Gu Mingxi made up his mind to wash himself.

Gu Guoxiang understood his son’s intentions, and said with a sigh, “You won’t be clean if you do it on your own. How about this then. Dad will help you wash today.”

He took his son to the washroom, and helped him take off all his clothes. Gu Mingxi’s lean body was completely bared. A little boy, his body was still not developed, white skin and narrow shoulders. And below his shoulders, well, there was nothing there.

That accident left him without his arms, not even a stump left behind. There were only his round shoulders, and the sinister looking pink scars around his shoulder and armpit area.

Gu Mingxi lowered his head, his legs pulling off his pants. Gu Guoxiang reached out to touch what remained of his right shoulder. This gave the kid a fright and he shivered. He turned to look at his father, his eyes dark and bright, carrying a hint of vigilance.

Gu Guoxiang realized that he hadn’t seen his son’s wounds in a long time. Collecting himself, he asked, “Does it still hurt?”

Gu Mingxi closed his lips and shook his head. Then said, “It doesn’t hurt.”

“Oh,” Gu Guoxiang nodded. “Come here, Dad will help you take off your pants and bathe.”

After dinner, Pang Qian refused to do her homework. She was lazing away in her parents’ room, watching the Steve Ma and Cecilia Yip version of “The Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber.” Their family had just installed cable TV that year, and suddenly there were a ton of Hong Kong and Taiwanese dramas to watch. Pang



Qian just couldn't stand the temptation. Fortunately, Pang Shuishen and Jin Ai'hua weren't very strict, and she could watch when she wanted to.

The whole family watched, entranced. Then a knock came at the door. Jin Ai'hua went to open the door, and there was Li Han.

When Pang Qian heard Li Han's voice, she was so frightened that her scalp would explode, worried that she'd come to tell her mother something. She told her father guiltily that she wasn't watching TV anymore, and would go back to her room to do homework. Then she quickly headed back to her room, greeting Li Han, "Hello, Auntie," as she passed the living room.

Li Han laughed, but there was a hint of anguish. With red eyes, she said, "Hi, Qian Qian."

Pang Qian didn't understand what was going on. She returned to her room and shut the door. But out of curiosity, she placed her ear onto the door.

Li Han came over to talk to Jin Ai'hua. She said Gu Guoxiang was helping Gu Mingxi bathe. She was feeling stuffy, so she came over to sit awhile.

Pang Qian heard her mother ask, "What's wrong? Did you and Guosheng have a fight?"

"Not really," Li Han said in a low tone. "It's just that when I was washing the dishes, he brought that up again."

The two of them were silent for awhile. Then Jin Ai'hua said, "Actually, I can understand why Guoxiang thinks that way. He's an engineer right now. People are all saying that when they choose the next supervisor, he's likely to be promoted. His work is going well, so there isn't as much pressure for raising kids. And Mingxi... Mingxi is a good kid, but he is...that way. You should take advantage while you're still young. Since Mingxi is disabled, you can have another child. Have another one, and when they grow up, they can also help take care of Mingxi."

This part of the story is in the mid 90s, right? Recall that China's one child policy was more in effect at the time.

Pang Qian had a fright. Although she was only 10 years old, she still understood what it meant to "have another one." Does that mean that Gu



Mingxi's parents wanted to give him a little brother or sister?

Then... Then what about Gu Mingxi?

With all sorts of ideas jumping around in her mind, Li Han said, "I know, I know, Ai'hua. But I have my own concerns. With Mingxi the way he is, it's a lot of work to take care of him. Eating, drinking, using the bathroom, I have to worry about everything. Right now, his school is nearby, so it's not a big concern. But what if he lives in dorms when he's in high school? Who knows, I might have to go along to study. If I have another child, how can I take care of him? And, even though Mingxi is a very good now, but what if he becomes rebellious when he gets older? His body has been disabled so greatly. In the future... When he grows up more, I'm afraid he will be unhappy. I already agreed with Guoxiang about not having another child, that we would just do well raising Mingxi. And besides not having his arms, he's very healthy and smart. But right now... Guoxiang keeps bringing this up, saying that before 40, we should have another one. Today during dinner, he even said such enigmatic words in front of Mingxi. I, I really..."

Li Han's voice was full of tears. Jin Ai'hua kept comforting her.

In the end, Li Han choked out, "Actually, the second year after Mingxi's arms were amputated, I had this idea too. Back then, I asked him if he wanted to have a younger brother or sister. But his expression made it very clear that he didn't want it."

Jin Ai'hua said, "How can you take a child's words so seriously? Who in our generation didn't have siblings? When my parents gave me younger siblings, they never asked my opinion about it."

Li Han said, "But Mingxi is different from others. Even back then, he understood some things. Every day, he would sleep with me, wrapped around me, not letting my sleep together with his dad. Every day, he would ask me countless times, 'Mommy, would you ever not want me?', 'Mommy, I'll be very good. I'll use my feet to eat and write.' Ai'hua, when I heard that, my tears just wouldn't stop falling. But Mingxi didn't cry at all. Even when he had to do his stretches, even when it must have been so painful that I would cry just watching, he never once cried."



Pang Qian listened somewhat absently from behind the door. Her heart felt extremely uncomfortable. She still had some recollection of the events from back then. Right now, thinking back on it, it was just like a nightmare.

Li Han sat for half an hour before going home. Pang Qian went out to the living room, with the excuse of getting some water to drink. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua were talking in their room, their voices faintly traveling out.

Pang Qian heard her mom, "What do you think Ah Han meant? She's always talking about how good Mingxi is. She can't be thinking about our Qian Qian? To have her become Mingxi's wife?"

In the living room, Pang Qian nearly spit out a mouthful of water. Then she heard Pang Shuisheng, "Quit the nonsense. Ah Han never had that intention. But after all, the reason Mingxi became this way... Our Qian Qian also holds some responsibility."

Jin Ai'hua said anxiously, "What responsibility does Qian Qian have? She was only 5 years old then! What did she understand?!"

"Be more civil when you talk," Pang Shuisheng said. "Actually, I still think that it would be best if Ah Han and Guoxiang had another child. At the factory, everyone inevitably talks about their kids. Like me, I'll talk about how Qian Qian dances, that she got a 100 on her test, that I took her to the park on the weekend. There's only Guoxiang who never speaks about Mingxi."

Pang Qian suddenly felt that her eyes were dry and sharp, her heart felt very unhappy. She put down her cup quietly and went back to her room.

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The next morning, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked to school together.

The snow on the road still hadn't melted, but it had become very muddy and slippery. Pang Qian was no longer interested in playing in the snow. She just lowered her head and walked silently.

After having walked halfway, she couldn't hold back any more. She asked the boy beside her, "Gu Mingxi, do your parents want to give you a little brother or sister?"

Gu Mingxi halted his steps and looked at me uncertain for awhile. He shook his



head, saying, “I don’t know.”

Pang Qian swayed back and forth beside him. “How can you not know? You don’t want a little brother or sister, right?”

Gu Mingxi shot her a glance. “Who said?! Who said I don’t want one?”

“I’m guessing.” Pang Qian didn’t dare repeat the words she’d overheard. She could only share her analysis. “Are you afraid that after your parents have another child, they won’t like you anymore?”

Gu Mingxi glanced at me, and then continued walking forward, two empty sleeves hanging limply at his sides. His voice was very calm, so much that he didn’t sound like an 11 year old kid. He said, “I know that my mom and dad both like me. Just... After I didn’t have arms, my dad probably felt a bit ashamed.”

Pang Qian stood, astonished.

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, then smiled. With his two little canine teeth, he looked especially cute. He asked, “Pang Pang, do you think I’m something to be ashamed of?”

Pang Qian shook her head until it rattled. Gu Mingxi smiled even more happily, saying, “I also don’t think that I have anything to be ashamed of. Really.”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 4

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again

### 4 No Ifs

*You're really stupid, always causing me trouble.*

---

Pang Qian sat at her desk, chin in her hands, in a daze. She thought about what Gu Mingxi said on their way to school. He said that his father felt ashamed of him.

That sentence was like a needle pushed into my heart. After all these years, I'd already gotten used to the way Gu Mingxi was, to his particular way of doing things. But you can't deny that once we leave the familiar surroundings of school and the Golden Compound, Gu Mingxi would inevitably become the focus of much attention.

Was it because of this reason that Uncle Gu never took Gu Mingxi out to play?

Gu Mingxi wasn't afraid to go outside.

When the school had spring and autumn outings, sports events, movie activities, etc., he would attend them all. In his free time, he would also take the bus with Pang Qian to go to the Children's Palace, the amusement park, or the library. It was only that there would be strangers who, either out of curiosity or sympathy, would ask Gu Mingxi what happened to his arms.

Pang Qian thought that this was very annoying. They didn't know those people after all. There would be some older aunties who even reached out to touch Gu Mingxi's disabled shoulders. And when he tried to move away, they would sigh that he was really very pitiful.

The thing she couldn't stand the most was that Gu Mingxi never put on a long face to those people. He wouldn't explain in great detail about how he lost his arms, but would simply say, "When I was younger, I got electrocuted by high



voltage.”

Some people would persist, “How old were you?”

Gu Mingxi answered, “6 years old.”

Every time she heard his response, Pang Qian would get into a very bad mood. She would walk over to Gu Mingxi and nudge at his back or pull at his empty sleeves to take him away, angrily shouting, “Let’s go, we’re going to be late!”

At the time, Pang Qian didn’t know how much anxiety she would have for this situation. Actually, it was because every time those people asked, it would bring back her memories of that summer day. That hot, stuffy afternoon. And what happened to Gu Mingxi’s body was a memory she never wanted to return to in her life.

Inside of everyone’s heart, there is an unopened bottle of regrets.

When people meet some kind of unfortunate situation, they’ll think, if I hadn’t done that back then, things wouldn’t have turned out like this.

Though Pang Qian was only a 10 year old child, she would sometimes foolishly think, if she hadn’t tossed that frisbee up on that high shelf that year, Gu Mingxi would probably be like her right now. He would be a normal student. Or he would be even more outstanding, and Uncle Gu would be proud of his son, the most amazing kid in the Golden Compound.

Even without arms, he won an award at the Hua Luogeng (famous mathematician) competition. The drawings he made with his feet were 100 times better than the ones that Pang Qian made with her hands. His literary composition was entered in a provincial competition, and it even won an Excellence Award. It was printed as part of an anthology of excellent children’s essays, and was even sold in bookstores.

If that year, Gu Mingxi hadn’t climbed up that shelf, what would the outcome have been?

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It was the summer of 1990. Gu Mingxi had already graduated from kindergarten, and he was happily enjoying his last summer break without homework. Li Han had already bought him a new backpack and notebooks.



When school started in September, he would become an elementary school student.

And Pang Qian, a fat little girl, was waiting to start kindergarten.

At the time, Gu Guoxiang had already been promoted from technician to assistant engineer. He even received the opportunity to study abroad for two years. After the lunar new year activities that year, he boarded a flight to France, along with three other engineers.

After Gu Guoxiang left, Li Han had to work as well as take care of household duties, so her life had become much more difficult. So that summer, Gu Mingxi would be left at Pang Qian's house during the day, to be taken care of by Grandpa and Grandma Pang.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had already become much closer by then. After the "braised egg crisis," Gu Mingxi didn't dare to leave Pang Qian on the side anymore. No matter what he was playing with the other kids, he would always bring Pang Qian along.

Pang Qian was fat, and she was short-tempered. She would always lose in games and then throw a tantrum. The kids in the same team as her would complain. Only Gu Mingxi didn't mind.

At that time, people's homes didn't have air conditioning. The air would always be hot and stuffy.

Pang Qian remembered that day. It was a mid-August afternoon. The cicadas outside the window were calling nonstop. She and Gu Mingxi were napping under the ceiling fan. When they woke up, one of them ate another two slices of watermelon. Gu Mingxi couldn't stand it anymore, so he shouted up and down, inviting some kids out to play. This was a necessary activity each day. Grandpa and Grandma Pang never opposed to it, only telling Gu Mingxi to take care of Pang Qian.

This was all there was to the Golden Compound. Four 6-story buildings, a garden, a camphor tree, a bicycle shed, and Old Zeng, who always sat at the gate listening to the radio.

The children only played for a short while, before things became a battlefield.



Following Gu Mingxi's orders, six kids went up against the wall separating the metals company's factory.

They were all factory workers' children, every day, playing at the factory. The guards always turned a blind eye. After so many years, there had never been an accident in the factory.

The factory was very big. There were piles of steel, and 7 or 8 big machines (cars?).

The kids played hide and seek for a bit. After running around for awhile, they were tired, so someone suggested playing frisbee.

Zhu Huiqiang brought the frisbee. They quickly came up with the rules. They split up into teams of two. Each team would put out someone to throw the frisbee, and they would see who threw it the furthest. Best two games out of three.

It was a very simple game with very simple rules. They all played happily. The first two times, Pang Qian didn't toss the disk very well. Her first two throws, the disk only went 3 or 4 meters. The other kids had a big laugh. Gu Mingxi patiently guided her though, and she used her strength in the third throw. That shallow blue disk actually flew very high, up onto a light gray shelf.

The shelf was very high up., with electrical poles on either side of it. On top of the shelf, there was a box with many strange lines on it. There was also an image of a yellow lightening bolt.

But these 5 and 6 year olds didn't know what those things meant.

Zhu Huiqiang looked up to see his beloved frisbee, resting against the large box. To Pang Qian, he said, "Fattie, you threw it up there! You'd better get it back!"

How was Pang Qian to climb up there? She pouted, and looked pleadingly to Gu Mingxi, even pulling at his hand.

Gu Mingxi withdrew his hand, looked up at the gray shelf, and said, "I'll help Fattie get it. Help push me up."

A few boys listened to him, surrounding him to create a human cushion. Gu



Mingxi rubbed his hands together. Before climbing up the pole, he said to Pang Qian, “You’re really stupid, always causing me trouble.”

Pang Qian stared at him. A little boy who had just turned 6. He had short hair. He wore a light blue t-shirt with a cartoon character on his chest. His forehead and nose glistened with sweat. The air whistled as he spoke, his two front teeth still missing.

Pang Qian kept looking up, watching Gu Mingxi’s actions. He was taller than other kids his age, though he was thin. With all four limbs, he climbed onto Zhu Huiqiang’s shoulders and climbed up the electrical pole. His posture was very good, and after just a few motions, his hand already reached the shelf.

Only, the memories of what happened after that were rather fragmented.

Pang Qian vaguely remembered a loud, booming sound. And there were bright sparks. There were children all around crying out in panic. Bursts of white smoke were surrounding them, as a very unpleasant smell traveled through the air.

This smell— It was just like when Grandpa forgot to tend to the stove. It was like the smell of the pork after it had been burnt. It was a horrible smell. Even Pang Qian, who loved to eat meat, felt nauseous after smelling it.

Pang Qian also remembered that she had cried along with the other children, their heartbreaking cries. A lot of adults ran over. There were also the shrill, piercing sound of the ambulance and police cars rushing over. Someone picked up the crying Pang Qian and moved her to the side. She cried and buried herself into that person’s arms. Lifting her head to look, she saw a few white-clothed people carrying some kind of darkened thing into the ambulance.

“Pang Pang.”

“ ... ”

“Pang Pang.”

“ ... ”

“Hey, Pang Qian.”

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She felt something on her leg, and Pang Qian was brought back to the present.



She turned to her right. Gu Mingxi's right foot was extended, holding a pen, poking at her leg.

"What are you doing?" Pang Qian said with a diffident tone, rubbing her leg.

Gu Mingxi gave her a strange look, "You should go get lunch."

Pang Qian looked up, and all the students in the class were already lined up at the front. The students on duty carried in two large foam boxes. Inside, there were neatly piled aluminum boxes with the student's lunches.

"All you know is how to eat!" Pang Qian said and then went to line up, leaving behind an angry Gu Mingxi.

She lined up and got two meal boxes, then put one on Gu Mingxi's desk. She even helped him take off the lid. With a hot meal in front of them, Pang Qian couldn't stop from swallowing. "Wow, today's braised pork chops!"

Gu Mingxi had already grabbed a spoon out of his desk with his foot. Pang Qian opened her own meal lid. She saw her pork chop was thin. Then she looked back over to Gu Mingxi's piece that was thick...

The boy had just bent over, spoon in foot, about to start eating, when Pang Qian grabbed away his meal box.

"I'd rather eat the large piece that you have," she said.

Gu Mingxi straightened his body. Pang Qian had already moved her meal box in front of him, "Let's switch."

Gu Mingxi lowered his head, looking at the meal box. He suddenly said, "If you can eat it, I'll give you this pork chop too."

Pang Qian, "..."

Gu Mingxi laughed to her, "Do you want it or not? I don't really like pork, you know."

That's true. Pang Qian blinked at him, "You're really not going to eat it?"

"Mm, not going to eat it," Gu Mingxi shook his head. He nudged at the pork chop with the spoon in his foot, "I haven't eaten any of it yet. Hurry and take it."

"Aiya, you're such a picky eater!" Pang Qian complained with a frown. Then a



moment later, she grinned. “Alright, I’ll help you eat it then! It would be bad to let it go to waste!”

Gu Mingxi also laughed secretly. He thought to himself that in the afternoon, he would have to ask Pang Qian to buy him some noodles from the canteen.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 5

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 5 (You) From the Same Desk

*Actually, I don't really need mechanical arms. I still like my original arms.*

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Because he had walked around in the snow barefoot several days ago, Gu Mingxi's feet were frostbitten. This made him very distressed.

Of the four seasons, the one he hated most was winter. In the winter, he had to wear very thick clothes, which made using his feet to do things more difficult. When he put on and took off his clothes, he couldn't do it all on his own either. And the other reason is that when the temperature decreases, walking around barefoot was really cold.

Despite Li Han making socks for Gu Mingxi that revealed his toes, he didn't wear them often. Most of the time, he just used his bare feet to do things. Washing his face, brushing his teeth, eating, writing... It had been five and a half years already, with two painful years of practicing at the start. The him now was already used to this way of life.

His frostbitten toes were red and itchy, but Gu Mingxi didn't dare to scratch them. When he was even younger, he'd gotten frostbite before. At the time, he didn't understand things, so he would constantly rub his feet together. The itching stopped, but his skin was also rubbed off, to the point that his feet would bleed. It was a long time before he fully recovered.

During labor(?) class, Gu Mingxi held a pair of scissors with his right foot. Enduring the itching, he carefully cut out a sheet of rigid paper. The teacher had already given out the task. Because New Year's Day was approaching, each pair of deskmates would make a greet card for the new year.

Without a doubt, this class was the class Gu Mingxi hated the most. It wasn't



easy for him to use scissors and other tools as well. And especially when there were group projects, even when he wanted to participate, the rest of the group wouldn't look very welcoming.

Regarding these things, Gu Mingxi never forced anything, and especially wouldn't quarrel with others. The 11 year old him already understood a truth of the world. There would be some people that would never be willing to accept him. They would think he was very dirty, very strange, and they would be very afraid. He couldn't do anything to change those things.

Pang Qian had been secretly watching Gu Mingxi the whole time, and kept feeling that something wasn't quite right. His desk was lower, so when she looked over, she couldn't not see his feet cutting the paper. She realized that the paper's edges were cut ragged and uglily. And he was very slow.

"Gu Mingxi, do you want me to help you?" she asked quietly. Then she added, "You've cut it so ugly. I don't want a card that ugly."

Hearing the first half of what she said, Gu Mingxi was rather happy. Hearing the second half made him unhappy. "If you don't want it, don't take it."

"Hm." Pang Qian said, "Then I won't give you the card I make either."

"Whatever." Gu Mingxi kept his head down. "I don't care."

She retorted, "I don't care either!"

The two of them stubbornly turned their heads away. Ten minutes later, Pang Qian couldn't stand it any longer. She tugged on Gu Mingxi's sleeve, "Gu Mingxi, help me draw on my card. My drawings are ugly."

Gu Mingxi lifted his head and looked at her, a faint smile on his lips. But still, he said sullenly, "It's not for me anyway. I don't care if it's ugly or not."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, thinking what happened. But she was an honest girl, so quickly said, "Then... I'll give it to you. You draw really nicely, help me draw something."

Gu Mingxi finally smiled, saying, "If you're giving it to me, that's more reason for you to draw. Would I care about a drawing that I made myself?"

Pang Qian scratched her head, confused. "Aren't you afraid my drawing will be



ugly?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head, smiled and said, “Not afraid.”

The class finally came to an end, and Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian exchanged cards. At this moment, Jian Zhe came up to his side and asked, “Gu Mingxi, going to the bathroom?”

Gu Mingxi nodded, put on his shoes, got up, and said, “Yeah.”

In school, because of his unusual body, there were indeed many students who didn’t dare to interact with him. But he still had a few good friends.

Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin were Gu Mingxi’s good friend. Neither of them were kids from the Golden Compound. When he started first grade, because he didn’t have arms, there were a lot of things that Gu Mingxi couldn’t do on his own. For example, the problem of using the restroom. During a parent-teacher meeting, Teacher Li made sure to ask a few boys’ parents if they would be willing to let their kids help Gu Mingxi.

Some parents directly said no, saying it was dirty or troublesome. Some were worried that it would affect their kids’ own studies. But Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin’s parents both agreed. Two young fathers urged their sons to watch out for and help Gu Mingxi. He wasn’t very different from everyone else after all.

From then on, Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin took on the responsibility of helping Gu Mingxi with the toilet. The two of them split up the work, alternating the weeks that they helped. Gu Mingxi couldn’t pull his pants up and down on his own, and would rely on the two boys to help him. After some time, the three of them naturally became good friends.

Of course, Gu Mingxi didn’t defecate at school. When there were times he couldn’t hold it, he would go to ask a male teacher to help him.

To have one of his classmates help wipe his butt... He wasn’t brave enough for that.

All things said and done, Gu Mingxi was a pretty easygoing boy. He didn’t mind many things, but that didn’t mean that his heart was so big and without bounds.



When this part of his life started, he was also very scared and anxious. After all, for someone who had lost both his arms, the world he would be living in was completely different to other people's.

Li Han had lied to him before. Gu Mingxi had just woken up from his operation, and he realized his shoulders were wrapped up in gauze. And his arms were missing. His shoulders hurt a lot. He was very panicked. He couldn't stop himself from crying and asking Li Han where his arms had gone to.

Li Han just told a lie that all mothers under the sky would tell. "Your arms were broken, so the doctor is going to fix them. When he's done fixing them, he will give them back to you."

Gu Mingxi, laying in the hospital bed, was very suspicious. He asked feebly, "Will it be fixed to how they were originally?"

"Of course."

"Then when they're fixed, can they be put back on?"

"Yes." Li Han touched his head lovingly, holding back her tears, nodding as she answered.

Gu Mingxi still wasn't convinced, and asked, "What if they can't be put back on?"

Li Han said, "That won't happen. The doctor is very amazing. As long as you're good and listen, and eat your medicine on time, your little arms will come back soon."

Gu Mingxi smiled, nodding. "Mm, I'll be good and listen."

He believed his mother's words. From then on, he looked forward to it, each and every day. Lying on the hospital bed, he would ask patiently.

"Mommy, why haven't my arms been fixed yet?"

"Mommy, could they have forgotten to fix my arms?"

"Mommy, help me ask the doctor, okay? Ask him when he can return my arms to me."

"Mommy, did they mess up my arms? If there's a little something wrong,



that's okay. Just let them put them back on for me, okay? I miss my arms!"

Even when the doctors and nurses came to change his dressings or give him a checkup, he would endure the pain. Laughing, he would ask, "Miss Doctor, hurry and fix up my arms, okay? I still have to go to school."

Until one day, he asked Li Han quietly, "Mommy, what's today's date?"

"What's the matter?" Li Han knew that 6 year old Gu Mingxi didn't have much of a concept regarding dates and times. She didn't understand why he would ask about it. Gu Mingxi said in a quiet voice, "I can go to school on September 1st. Mommy, is it September 1st yet?"

It was already mid September by then, but Li Han lied to him. "Not yet, Mingxi."

Later, Gu Mingxi seemed to understand a little. He grew more and more silent, not at all like the expectant boy at the start. He asked Li Han, "Mom, are my arms never going to be fixed?"

Seeing him ask like this, Li Han couldn't hold it back any longer. Her tears started falling. Trying to sound as calm as possible, she said, "Mingxi, the doctor just told me that your arms were broken so much that they can't be fixed."

"How can they not keep their word?" Gu Mingxi cried, and foolishly asked, "So now what? I don't have arms anymore?"

Li Han nodded, not forgetting to comfort him. "No, the doctor said that in the future, they can make you mechanical arms. They'll... They'll be just like your original arms."

"Mechanical arms?" Gu Mingxi's eyes grew wide, pleasantly surprised. "You mean like the Transformers?"

At that time, the Transformers cartoon had taken the country by storm. There wasn't a boy anywhere that didn't like it. Li Han's words had reignited the expectations in Gu Mingxi's heart. His immature self had thought that having two mechanical arms like the Transformers would be a pretty cool thing.

Even when Jin Ai'hua brought Pang Qian to the hospital to visit, Gu Mingxi proudly proclaimed that in the future, he would have two mechanical arms that



could do anything. They could shoot bullets and they could change shape.

Little Pang Qian looked at him with a face filled with envy. She reached out her fat little hand to touch the gauze on his shoulders, asking, “They’ll put it on here?”

“Mm!”

“Will it hurt when they put it on?”

“Oh... Probably a little bit.” Gu Mingxi thought seriously, and said, “But I’m not afraid!”

Pang Qian said, “Then... Then later, can you let me play with your mechanical arms?”

“Okay, but you have to remember to return them,” Gu Mingxi said happily. But then he was a bit discouraged. “Those doctors don’t keep their word. They originally said that they would fix my arms, but in the end, they didn’t fix them. Actually, I don’t really need mechanical arms. I still like my original arms.”

When Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were going home that day, Gu Mingxi told her that he’d be going to Shanghai over winter break.

“Shanghai? What for?” Pang Qian asked.

“I don’t know either. My dad told me,” Gu Mingxi answered as he kicked the pebbles on the ground.

The snow had already melted. As they walked back on the familiar little road, Pang Qian smelled the scent of roasted sweet potatoes. I couldn’t stop myself from reaching into my pocket for change.

“Do you eat sweet potatoes?” she asked.

Gu Mingxi shook his head.

“Then I’ll buy a small one.” Pang Qian walked over to the grandpa selling sweet potatoes and pulled out 50 cents from her pocket. She said, “Grandpa, give me a 50 cent sweet potato.”

The grandpa looked at her, and then reached into the sweet potato oven. He picked one out, looked at it, then put it back. He picked another out, looked at it,



and put it back inside again. Finally, he said to Pang Qian, “Little girl, I don’t have a sweet potato that small. Why don’t you buy one worth 1 dollar and share it with your friend?”

Pang Qian blushed. She only had 50 cents.

“Then I won’t buy.” She stuffed her money back into her pocket, and turned around to leave. Gu Mingxi shouted for her to stop.

“Pang Pang, I have money in my pocket. Take it out yourself and buy one worth 1 dollar.”

Pang Qian was unhappy. “I don’t eat handouts!”

Gu Mingxi said, “I’ll split it with you.”

Hearing this, Pang Qian had become cheerful. She familiarly reached into his pocket and pulled out the money.

After they bought their food, they continued home. Pang Qian was eating the tasty sweet potato, and thought of the question from before. She asked, “Is your dad taking you to Shanghai to visit relatives?”

“I don’t think so. We don’t have any relatives in Shanghai.”

“Then are you going for vacation?”

“I don’t know, maybe.”

“My dad’s been to Shanghai before.” Pang Qian’s face was stuffed, so her words were a bit unclear, “He said Shanghai has trains (subway/metro). Some of the steel they use is from their factory.”

“My dad also mentioned it before.” Gu Mingxi asked, “Have you ridden on the train before?”

“No,” Pang Qian shook her head. “You?”

Gu Mingxi also shook his head. “Me neither. I can ride it when I go to Shanghai this time though.”

“When you come back, tell me if it’s fun or not.”

“Okay.”



“Hey, do you want some sweet potato?” She suddenly thought of the delicious food in her hands. “You said we would share it. If you don’t eat it now, I’ll finish it all.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her hands and the sweet potato that was nearly gone. He rejected, “I won’t eat it.”

Pang Qian stared at him, “Why not!”

“I’m not hungry.” Gu Mingxi turned and quickly walked off. Pang Qian wasn’t letting it go though. She caught up to him and stuffed the sweet potato at his mouth. “Eat a bite. It’s sweet and delicious!”

Gu Mingxi went left and right, but still couldn’t avoid it. Without another choice, he could only take a bite of the sweet potato. “Okay! I’ve had some!”

“Is it sweet?”

Helplessly, he said, “Yes.”

Pang Qian laughed. It was at this time that a woman from the Golden Compound cycled past. Seeing these two kids playing happily in the road, she laughed, and called out, “Hey, Mingxi! Don’t play on the street, it’s dangerous. Hurry and take your wife home.”

“...I’ll be sure to watch out, Auntie Zhong.” Gu Mingxi was a bit quiet, but still responded out of courtesy.

After the woman named Zhong passed by, Pang Quan pursed her lips. Angrily, she said, “Why did you talk to her? My mom hates her, because she’s always talking nonsense in the compound.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her, without a sound.

This woman was indeed a bit of a gossip. For example, she was the only person in the whole Golden Compound who still called Pang Qian as Gu Mingxi’s “wife.”

Even after Jin Ai’hua argued with her in front of the whole cafeteria at work, she still didn’t change her ways.

At that time, Zhong Xiaolian said with irony to Jin Ai’hua, “When Gu Mingxi was still jumping around, your family was clinging to theirs. You helped give rides, helped take care of him, you even treated him like your own son. Now that



Gu Mingxi is disabled, you're just throwing him away like that! So what if I say 'wife'? Oh! Gu Mingxi isn't good enough for your Fattie now?! Don't you forget, your Fattie has some responsibility in Gu Mingxi losing his arms!"

Hearing these words, Jin Ai'hua pushed up her sleeves, as if getting ready for a brawl. In the end, she was stopped by Pang Shuisheng, who'd been pulled over by the commotion. Pang Shuisheng made a vow in front of all those colleagues, "If any member of our Pang family were to look down on Gu Mingxi because he has no arms, then they will be struck by lightening! Gu Guoxiang is my brother, who wore the same open-crotch pants (good friends since young)! Right now, he's out of the country, so I, Pang Shuisheng, will take care of Gu Mingxi in his place! Gu Mingxi is my son! But Mingxi and Qian Qian are still young. Don't talk any more about these (arranged) child marriages. In the future, when they grow up, if those two kids really fall in love, I, Pang Shuisheng, make this promise today! I will not oppose it!"

"Pang Shuisheng, what are you saying!" Jin Ai'hua pulled him away angrily. Pang Shuisheng turned, "Not afraid to bring shame? Shut up!"

Of course, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian didn't know about this matter. But ever since then, Jin Ai'hua has hated Zhong Xiaolian. She would often say bad things about Zhong Xiaolian to Pang Qian, telling her daughter to treat that woman's words as nonsense.

With regards to the problem of Gu Mingxi, it was without a doubt, that Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua had very different opinions. After Gu Mingxi spent a year recuperating at home, he entered primary school with Pang Qian. At that time, Gu Guoxiang still hadn't returned home yet. Pang Shuisheng expended a lot of effort for the two kids. He asked a carpenter to make a customized desk for Gu Mingxi. He even pleaded with the teacher to let his daughter be deskmates with Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian were both still small then, so naturally, they wouldn't go against their parents. So they became deskmates just like that, and then it was 5 years later.

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That evening, as the three members of the Pang family started eating, Jin



Ai'hua suddenly asked Pang Qian, "Did you run into Zhong Xiaolian today?"

Pang Qian nodded, then said immediately, "I didn't talk to her."

"If you meet her in the future, just leave. Make sure not to pay her any attention." Jin Ai'hua added some food to Pang Qian's bowl. "That crazy woman came back and ran into me, and even specially talked about how she saw you and Gu Mingxi playing happily in the street. You were feeding him sweet potato, and it seemed like you were getting along well. What kind of garbage is she spewing?"

Pang Qian continued eating silently, "..."

Pang Shuisheng was a bit angry, "Ai'hua!"

"What!" Jin Ai'hua turned to look at Pang Qian, asking, "Let me ask you. Did you feed Gu Mingxi sweet potato?"

"No," Pang Qian immediately shook her head. "I was eating it myself."

Jin Ai'hua looked at her for a moment, then said, "You're getting older, so you should understand things. Gu Mingxi is a boy. Although you two are deskmates, you two can't get too close. Understand?"

"Mm." Pang Qian was like small chick pecking at grains.

"Fortunately, when you graduate primary school, you two won't go to the same school anymore." Thinking about this matter, Jin Ai'hua became happy.

Pang Qian was caught by surprise, her head snapping up. "Why?"

Pang Shuisheng stopped Jin Ai'hua. "It's still uncertain, don't talk so much."

"Dad..." She didn't know why, but upon hearing that she and Gu Mingxi wouldn't be attending the same junior high, Pang Qian felt a bit scared, and had a deep feeling of dismay. Pang Shuisheng didn't let her continue asking, and said, "Eat. It's still more than a year away, what's the rush."

The next day, Pang Qian naturally told Gu Mingxi about her doubts. But Gu Mingxi just said, "I don't know. My parents haven't told me anything."

"It can't be that you're changing schools to Shanghai!" Pang Qian said anxiously, "Go home and ask your parents!"



Seeing her so on edge, Gu Mingxi actually really wanted to smile. He asked, “What’s wrong? Haven’t you always complained that you don’t want to share a desk with me? If we’re at different schools, then won’t you be free?”

Shocked, Pang Qian blinked her eyes a few times. Then she said, “That’s right... Then I won’t have to go to school back with you. I won’t have to get your meal boxes. I won’t have to help you do things. Won’t have to help you put on your raincoat. Won’t have to help you tie your shoelaces and put on your scarf.”

“Mm.” Gu Mingxi looked at her, his lips forming a smile. “Isn’t this good then? You always complain that I make things troublesome for you.”

“Good, good...” Pang Qian kept blinking. Then suddenly, she viciously spat out, “Good, my butt!”

Gu Mingxi frowned and his lips twitched. “Hey, Pang Pang, if you talk like that, it’s really quite like your mom...”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 6

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 6 His Promise

*You'd better not wear this stuff tomorrow. It's too disgusting!*

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Pang Qian had indeed complained many times before, about not wanting to be deskmates with Gu Mingxi. Especially after starting third grade. Kids heights started to change, so Teacher Li would rearrange everyone's seats. People who were shorter or had poor eyesight would be moved to the front, and taller kids and those with good eyesight would be moved to the back.

Only Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi never had their seats changed. Even when they changed classrooms, she and Gu Mingxi were like fixed items, bound to one spot. In every classroom, they would sit in the last row, next to the window.

Pang Qian's birthday was in August, so she was the youngest in her class. She also wasn't very tall, so of course she wouldn't be happy being stuck in the last row. Moreover, not too far behind their seats was where the broom, mop, dustpan, and bucket were located. In the summer, when there was more garbage, there would inevitably be a smell. Pang Qian had complained many times about it. But because of the particular way that Gu Mingxi read and wrote things, there was no way he could sit in the front row. So, for a long time, Pang Qian would complain for the whole day that she didn't want to be deskmates with Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi never said anything, and neither did he express any unhappiness. When they were going to start fourth grade, he even went to find Teacher Li to ask about moving Pang Qian's seat to the front.

He said, "Teacher Li, just let Pang Qian change seats like everyone else. I can sit by myself in the back. I already don't have any problems doing things with my feet now. Most of the time, I don't really need Pang Qian's help anyway."



Of course, Teacher Li couldn't answer this lightly. He took advantage of the next parent-teacher meeting to pull Li Han and Pang Shuisheng into the corridor, to tell them about this matter.

Teacher Li knew that Pang Shuisheng had arranged for his daughter to sit with Gu Mingxi because they had grown up together and were very close. Gu Mingxi wouldn't treat Pang Qian too cautiously because of his disability. And they thought that Pang Qian would be fine with it, helping a bit to take care of Gu Mingxi.

But now, both kids were expressing that they didn't want to be deskmates. Naturally, Teacher Li had to consult with their parents about it.

After listening to Teacher Li, Li Han's complexion didn't look very good. Leaving Gu Mingxi to sit alone in the back was something she wouldn't agree to. But changing deskmates... Even Pang Qian, who knew him so well, was unhappy about it, wouldn't others be even more unwilling? What if Gu Mingxi's new deskmate bullied him?

Seeing her head lowered, without a word, Pang Shuisheng understood. He told Teacher Li that it wasn't necessary to change Pang Qian's seat. When he got home, he would deal with his daughter.

Pang Shuisheng's method of dealing with Pang Qian was to give her a beating. He spanked her until her bottom was red, and her cries were splintered.

The next day, the red-eyed Pang Qian walked to school with Gu Mingxi. She was so angry that she didn't talk to him. When Gu Mingxi spoke to her, she just turned away and didn't look at him. Even when it was lunch time, she didn't help him get his lunch. Without another choice, he could only wait until all the other students had already gotten their lunch, and then asked the class representative to help him.

Pang Qian kept her head lowered, focused on her own meal. She didn't think she'd done anything wrong at all, it was all Gu Mingxi's fault! If he didn't want to change seats, fine. But why did he have to go complain to Teacher Li?! She got beat by her dad because of that!

This one-sided cold war ended after the first class in the afternoon. Gu Mingxi left the classroom on his own. When he came back, his head was tilted, a bag of



Mylikes (candy; small crispy balls coated in chocolate, like *Whoppers* or *Maltesers*) between his cheek and his shoulders.

He turned in front of Pang Qian, and with a “pa ta” sound, the bag of Mylikes fell onto her desk.

“For you to eat,” he said.

Pang Qian’s face burned up slightly. Gu Mingxi sat down at his desk, looked at her, then asked, “Why are you unhappy today? Does your stomach hurt?”

The 10 year old boy asking her lightly, with a hint of concern in his voice, confused Pang Qian’s little brain.

She silently took the bag of Mylikes, pulled it open, and put a piece into her mouth.

The taste of chocolate unraveled in her mouth. She turned to look at Gu Mingxi at her side. He stared at her with a pair of bright and clear eyes. Pang Qian suddenly thought of her ridiculous beating, and she felt wronged. She said, with a crying sound, “I won’t change my seat! But in the future, you have to let me copy your math homework!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“When we’re taking our math test, you have to let me look too,” she sobbed as she ate another piece of Mylikes. “And when we have to draw, you have to help me draw. And in our natural (sciences?) class, you have to take care of digging earthworms and raising silkworms. I’m most scared of bugs! Also, you’re not allowed to complain to Teacher Li or my dad again!”

With his mouth hanging open, Gu Mingxi couldn’t say anything.

Pang Qian stared at him, “You’re not agreeing?”

“I can agree to the rest, but about math... I can’t.” Gu Mingxi curled his lips, “If you don’t understand, I can teach it to you.”

Then, the seat-changing crisis ended. Pang Qian never brought up the matter of changing seats again.

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After final exams, it was time for winter break.



That New Year's, Gu Mingxi's family didn't stay in E City. Rather, they went to a small city in the north, Z City. That was Li Han's hometown. Gu Mingxi's (maternal) grandparents, aunts and uncles were all there.

Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian that after his accident, his mom never went back to her hometown. But this year, his grandparents missed the, so Gu Guoxiang and Li Han decided to take Gu Mingxi there for the New Year's celebrations. After that, their family would go directly to Shanghai, and then return to E City.

"I asked my mom, and she said I wouldn't transfer to Shanghai," Gu Mingxi said to Pang Qian with a smile.

Pang Qian asked, "Then what are you going to Shanghai for?"

"I really don't know. My mom wouldn't say." Gu Mingxi shrugged. "When we get there, I'll know."

Gu Mingxi left for more than 20 days. In Pang Qian's memory, this was the longest time that she had been separated from Gu Mingxi. From when they were very young, they'd seen each other every day. Pang Qian realized that, after not having seen Gu Mingxi in so long, she missed him quite a bit.

It wasn't until winter break was almost over that their family returned from their long trip.

When Gu Guoxiang and his family entered the compound, Pang Shuisheng happened to be smoking on the balcony. He shouted to Pang Qian inside, "Qian Qian, Mingxi's back."

Pang Qian, who was lazing around in bed, watching TV dramas, jumped up, put on her slippers, and charged out.

When she got down to the third floor, she heard the sound of footsteps. And in a moment, Gu Guoxiang's family was in front of her.

Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi walking behind his father, wearing a new down jacket. His hair was a little messy. When he saw Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi was a bit taken aback. Then he cried out, "Pang Pang, Happy New Year."

"Happy New Year," Pang Qian said to Gu Guoxiang and Li Han. All of them walked up to the fifth floor together. Seeing Pang Qian walking shyly behind



them, Gu Mingxi asked Gu Guoxiang, “Dad, can I go over to Pang Qian’s house to play a bit?”

“Go on.” Gu Guoxiang looked at him, before pulling their luggage inside their house.

Gu Mingxi was about to follow Pang Qian into 501, when Li Han called out and stopped him. She pulled out a plastic bag and gave it to him. Gu Mingxi’s cheeks reddened, and then crooked his head to take the package.

The two kids went into Pang Qian’s room. Pang Qian couldn’t wait any longer and asked, “Gu Mingxi, so why did you go to Shanghai?”

Gu Mingxi’s head was still tilted, carrying the package. He sat down on the edge of her bed and blinked at her. He said, “This is a New Year’s gift for you. Take it.”

“Oh! I have a gift!” Pang Qian happily took the package from him and pulled out its contents. It was a light yellow headband. She happily said, “Thank you, Gu Mingxi!”

“I bought it in Shanghai.” Gu Mingxi’s face was still a bit red. In a quiet voice, he said, “As long as you like it.”

Pang Qian sat down beside him, and asked, “Did you take the train in Shanghai?”

“Yeah,” Gu Mingxi nodded.

Pang Qian was very envious. “Was it fun?”

“Yeah.” Gu Mingxi said, “The train was really fast. Stop after stop, and with a whoosh, we arrived. Only... It was all underground, so we couldn’t see anything outside the window.”

Pang Qian tilted her head in thought. She heard Gu Mingxi continue, “Oh, and I also took a plane.”

“A plane?!” Pang Qian’s mouth dropped. “Didn’t you take the train (the big, intercity kind) to Z City?”

“Mm. But we took a plane from Z City to Shanghai. We couldn’t get train tickets, and my mom can’t ride the bus because she gets motion sickness.” Gu



Mingxi was in high spirits. “The plane looked really big, but it was actually pretty small inside. There was no space at all. When we were on the plane, it was really noisy. Oh! But on the plane, there were snacks and soft drinks. You didn’t have to pay for them.”

He kept talking, and Pang Qian listened attentively, sometimes interrupting to ask questions.

The two kids hadn’t seen in each other in close to a month, so they had a lot of things to talk about. After awhile, their conversation turned to how they spent their New Year’s. Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian that he saw his grandparents that he hadn’t seen in a long time. But in the north, they were called *laolao* (instead of *waipo* for a maternal grandmother) and *laoye* (instead of *waigong* for maternal grandfather). He also said that the snow in the north was what you really called fluffy snow. It covered the ground, and was half a meter thick. When you stepped in it, it went past your knees.

“But our house had heat, so it was very comfortable, not cold like it is here.” He laughed and then looked at her, Pang Pang, what did you do for the New Year’s?”

Pang Qian scratched her head. “I didn’t go anywhere. We just went to our relative’s house for dinner. Even the lucky money I was given (for New Year’s) was taken away by my mom.” She suddenly thought of a very important matter. She plopped over to her desk and pulled out her winter break math homework. “Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi, did you finish your homework? Hurry and let me borrow it to copy down! I don’t have time!”

“...”

When Gu Mingxi was leaving, Pang Qian asked again, “Hey, you still didn’t tell me. Why did your parents take you to Shanghai?”

The boy’s face strangely turned red again. Quietly, he said, “Mm... I’ll tell you later, okay?”

“Why?”

“Right now... I’m not sure yet.” He lowered his eyes, then said nervously, “You’ll know in another month.”



Not long after Gu Mingxi returned, the new semester started at school. He didn't guard his winter break homework well, and Pang Qian plundered all his math papers. She spent the whole night copying it.

She'd soon forgotten the question she was curious about all through the break, but in the middle of April, she suddenly got her answer.

That day, Gu Mingxi was different from usual. He was a bit excited, a bit nervous. He zoned out in class, and then he would suddenly laugh. Pang Qian thought it was strange, so she asked him, "What's wrong with you?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head. He was holding a pencil in his right foot, drawing aimlessly on the paper. After he drew awhile, he said, "Pang Pang, tonight, come over to my house to play, okay?"

Pang Qian thought it was odd, and asked, "Why?"

"Just come over, okay? Just 10 minutes is enough." His eyes were very eager. "Okay?"

Pang Qian nodded, "Okay, after I eat, I'll go over."

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That evening, Pang Qian went over to Gu Mingxi's house as promised. Li Han opened the door for her, her face bright with a smile. She said, "Qian Qian, Mingxi's waiting for you in his room."

Pang Qian thought it was strange, but she pushed open Gu Mingxi's door, "Gu Mingxi, I'm coming in."

She bent slightly, her head entering the room. In the dim lighting, she only saw a person's figure standing by the desk, blocking the light from the lamp.

Pang Qian knew that it was Gu Mingxi, she was very familiar with his stance. But the odd thing was that when she saw him, she felt that there was something different.

She walked into the room. Standing in front of Gu Mingxi, she saw the boy's nervous face, and also a few beads of sweat on his forehead. That's when she realized how he was different from before.

Under Gu Mingxi's shoulders were a pair of arms.



He had specially worn a long sleeved shirt. He stood upright in front of Pang Qian, and there was even a red scarf tied on his chest. Pang Qian remembered this shirt. When Gu Mingxi used to wear this shirt, the sleeves were always empty, hanging off his sides. But now, he looked just like any other boy, limbs intact, completely healthy. He looked even better than other boys though, more lively.

Pang Qian stared at him. Gu Mingxi also stared at her, with big, bright eyes. After awhile, he lowered his head and looked at his two stiff arms. He sucked on his lower lip, then said, "These are the prosthetic arms I had made in Shanghai over winter break. Dad said that next year, I'll be starting junior high. He told me to wear these prosthetic arms to school, it will look better."

Pang Qian lifted her hand and touched his left arm. Gu Mingxi kept his head lowered, watching her motions. Through the fabric sleeves, Pang Qian only felt something hard. She even knocked on them, with a bang bang sound.

Then she pulled at his left hand. Gu Mingxi didn't move. Pang Qian felt his cold, hard palm and fingers. It was an uncomfortable feeling. It reminded her of the scary mannequins on display at the department store.

Pang Qian stood for awhile, in a daze. Then she asked, "Gu Mingxi, can you use your hands?"

"..." He was silent, and then shook his head, "Doesn't seem like it."

"Eating, writing, holding things. You can't do any of that?"

The brightness in his eyes gradually dimmed. "No. My dad said it looked better this way."

"..."

Gu Mingxi smiled with great effort, his two canine teeth showing. In a soft tone, his voice slightly shaking, "Pang Pang, do you think I look good this way?"

"No, it's not good!" Pang Qian pulled her hand back, pouting. She said with dislike, "What's so good to look at? Two arms that can't be used for anything! It's so ugly!"

She even took two steps back. With a frown, she stared at the Gu Mingxi's



disappointed face. “I’m going back. You’d better not wear this stuff tomorrow. It’s too disgusting!”

“...”

Before he could make a sound, she’d already turned to open the door. Without looking back, she’d already gone.

After that, Pang Qian never saw Gu Mingxi’s two prosthetic arms again. She hadn’t even taken a close look at them, and she didn’t know how they were attached to Gu Mingxi’s body. All she knew was that Gu Mingxi listened to her. It was the first time he’d rejected Gu Guoxiang’s request, refusing to wear the prosthetic arms to school.

Gu Guoxiang was very mad. Once, he even got drunk and slapped Gu Mingxi hard on the face because of this matter.

How could he not be angry? Originally, he’d already found an opportunity for Gu Mingxi to go to an excellent private junior high. The school’s principal only had one condition, which was that Gu Mingxi had to wear the prosthetic arms to school. That way, they would be able to let him through the school gates. And during activities outside the classroom, he would look normal, less frightening.

But now, everything was ruined.

Gu Guoxiang looked coldly at Gu Mingxi and said, “Do you know what the partner school for Thirst for Knowledge Elementary is? It’s Origin of Flight Middle School. Do you know how many students from Origin of Flight can test into Excellence High? Never more than one fifth (1/5)! Gu Mingxi, with your decision today, don’t hope for me to ever care about you again!”

The boy stubbornly twisted his head, saying, “You never cared about me. After my arms were gone, you never once went to a parent-teacher meeting.”

Gu Guoxiang was furious. He raised his hand and slapped Gu Mingxi on the face. It was hard for Gu Mingxi to control his balance, so he staggered back a few steps, before crashing into the wall.

His head was spinning. Li Han wiped away her tears, tightly clutching onto Gu Guoxiang. It was only at home, when only his wife and son were present, that Gu Guoxiang would forget himself so. He pointed a finger at Gu Mingxi, his angry



voice shaking, “You– What did you say?!”

After awhile, Gu Mingxi finally found his footing. He bent his head and rubbed his left cheek against his shoulder. It was burning in pain. He said softly, “Dad, I’m willing to go to Origin of Flight Middle School. I promise you, I will get into Excellence High. Not only will I get in, I will also make sure that Pang Qian gets in.

His eyes were lowered, unable to look at Gu Guoxiang. Finally, even more quietly, he said, “Dad, I won’t call you a disgrace.”

One year later, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian graduated from Thirst for Knowledge Elementary, and smoothly started school at Origin of Flight Middle School, 3 km away from the Golden Compound.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 7

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 7 Origin of Flight Middle School

*I'd rather walk to school than have you take me.*

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Origin of Flight is an old-fashioned middle school. It's split into two sections, a junior high and high school. As per the the school district divisions, most of the students who graduate from Thirst for Knowledge Elementary will graduate into Origin of Flight Middle School. Other students will try to test into a private school, or they may pay the fees to study at a school outside their school district.

What Gu Guoxiang said was right. Origin of Flight was not rumored to be a very good school. The parents at the Golden Compound even called it a garbage middle school. There was a story that went around the compound. There were two boys who had similar (test) results, who graduated from elementary school at the same time. Boy A's family paid a sponsorship fee so that he could study at a better junior high school. Boy B enrolled directly into Origin of Flight. In the third year of junior high, Boy A was a middling rank in his class. But Boy B was always top five in his class. Boy B's parents were rather proud of that. They thought that Boy A's family had put tens of thousands of dollars to waste.

When it was time for high school entrance exams, both boys performed as usual. Boy A easily into Excellence High. However, Boy B's test scores were only enough to get into General High. Boy B's parents were very surprised, so they went to ask the school about it. That's when they found out that of the more than 40 students in the class, only one of them tested into Excellence High.

Let me just make a comment about the high school names. (You'll have seen Excellence High in the last chapter.) I'm not sure if they're actual names, just like how the author names her cities using single letters from the Roman alphabet. They might not even be individual schools and instead, represent



good, reputable schools versus mediocre ones. The names for the high schools are originally *zhong* (meaning weighty or serious, to represent a good school) and *pu* (I assume, for the word *putong*, which means ordinary). I'm just going with Excellence and General High whenever they're mentioned.

From then on, Origin of Flight's graduation (to a good school) rates became a topic of anxiety for many parents in the school district.

Although Pang Shuisheng knew that Pang Qian's scores weren't very good, he still held onto the possibility of a miracle. So he let her take the entrance exam for a private school. Gu Mingxi, along with a great bunch of their class, also went for the test.

When Pang Qian was taking the exam, she felt like she was trying to read hieroglyphics. Those applied mathematics problems were just too scary. A storage pond had a water capacity of xxx. Inside, there were three water pipes, each piping in water at a different rate. That wasn't all though. This storage pond also had three floor drains, each also with a different rate of draining. The pipes and drains were simultaneously piping in and draining out water. The question asked when the storage pond would be filled with water. Just reading the question made Pang Qian's head dizzy. How was she supposed to come up with an answer?

Of course, she and most of her classmates did not pass the written exam. And Gu Mingxi was advanced to the interview portion.

This wasn't the same school that Gu Guoxiang had made arrangements with previously. When the teachers saw Gu Mingxi's empty sleeves hanging from his shoulders, and then saw his school record and written exam results in their hands, they were all stunned.

But the private school had their own rules for enrollment. They didn't look only at test scores, but also considered other aspects of the students. This allowed the school to have a fuller, more comprehensive view of the student and their future prospects. Regarding Gu Mingxi's situation, the recruitment officer offered a special explanation to Li Han. The recruiter said that they didn't mind Gu Mingxi's disability at all. But because each of their students were top-ranking at their previous elementary schools, this creates a strongly competitive



atmosphere in their school. There was a lot of stress to do well in their studies. They (the school) were afraid that putting Gu Mingxi into such a competitive place would cause him a lot of difficulties.

Li Han only smiled and said, “I understand.”

Gu Mingxi returned home with his mom. The moment that Pang Qian saw him, she asked how the interview went.

Truth be told, Pang Qian’s feelings were a bit unclear. She wasn’t sure if she wanted Gu Mingxi to pass or not pass the interview. She didn’t expect for Gu Mingxi to think about the same thing and return this question to her.

“Do you want me to have passed or not to have passed?”

Pang Qian refused to answer, but kept asking, “Did you pass or not?”

“No,” Gu Mingxi laughed as he shook his head. “I don’t have arms. You know, it’s a lot of trouble for me to go to school.”

Pang Qian stared at his face, trying to figure out his feelings. After she was certain that he wasn’t at all unhappy, she finally sat down beside him and said, “Nonsense. How is it troublesome for you to go to school?”

Gu Mingxi smiled at her, without responding.

Actually, they both knew, it was rather troublesome for him to go to school.

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We don’t even have to mention daily activities like eating, drinking, and going to the restroom. But talking about studies. Ordinary things like reading, writing, and drawing – Gu Mingxi could use his feet to do those things. But junior high and elementary school were completely different. There were a lot of classes that required the use of your hands. For Gu Mingxi, this really was a difficulty. For example, chemistry experiments, physics experiments, dissection labs... Not to mention physical education class, daily exercises, eyes exercises, being on duty, cleaning, the spring and autumn class outings, and other school events. Because of the limitations of Gu Mingxi’s body, all of this would cause some difficulty for him.

Public schools are required to provide the nine years of compulsory education



to all students. But private schools? Who would willingly bring in such a burden?

So, in the summer of 1997, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian received their acceptance letters to Origin of Flight Middle School. Pang Shuisheng immediately went to determine the size of the desks at the school, and once again, asked the carpenter to build a new custom desk for Gu Mingxi.

By the recommendation of the elementary school teacher, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian were, again, put into the same class. Their head teacher, Teacher Cao, knew in advance about Gu Mingxi's situation, and agreed to let Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi continue being deskmates.

The admission matters for the two kids were entirely taken care of by Li Han and Pang Shuisheng. Gu Guoxiang didn't step in at all. He would just go to work every day with a sullen face, then get off work. When he passed by Gu Mingxi, he didn't even look at him.

Gu Mingxi still called him Dad. And when he met any difficulties, he would still search him out to ask for help. For example, if there was a bottle cap that was screwed too tightly, or if something was placed too high up. Even when he had to take care of his bowel movements, he would find his dad to help pull his pants down and wipe his butt.

Each time, Gu Guoxiang would silently go to help, and when the task was complete, he would silently leave.

He knew he was behaving in an excessive manner. He was already a middle-aged man, but he acted this way toward his son. But every time he faced Gu Mingxi, Gu Guoxiang felt very depressed. He was afraid that if he spoke to his son, he wouldn't be able to hold back his temper. Although Gu Mingxi hadn't done anything wrong, Gu Guoxiang just couldn't bear to see him. To see his appearance, to see the way he did things with his feet. And most, to see his (Mingxi's) attitude toward himself (Guoxiang) – always respectful, polite, but also estranged.

This situation was continued on for another month. One day, Gu Mingxi and Li Han were sitting together, eating watermelon. It was sliced up on the table. Gu Mingxi lowered his head and bit at the watermelon directly. He inevitably ended up covered in juice, and Li Han would occasionally help him wipe his mouth. He



suddenly said something in a very calm tone.

He said, “Mom, you’re 39 years old. You and Dad should have another kid.”

That evening, Li Han closed the door to her room. Tears running down her face, near collapse, she and Gu Guoxiang seriously spoke about it. They weren’t young anymore. To bring up this topic after so many years, the atmosphere was really heavy.

Finally, they agreed that they would stop using contraceptives. Let things come as they will. If a baby really came, they would keep it and give birth.

Half a month before school started, Pang Shuisheng suddenly thought of a very serious problem.

Origin of Flight wasn’t close to the Golden Compound at all. How should Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi get to school?

Of the other students in the compound that went to Origin of Flight, most of them would ride their bikes to school. And a few would take the public bus.

But Gu Mingxi couldn’t ride a bike, and it wasn’t convenient to have him take the bus on his own. The only remaining option was to have Pang Qian ride the bus with him.

This, Pang Qian didn’t agree to.

When she graduated elementary school, her grandma gifted her an especially beautiful bicycle. 22 inches. Powder blue. She’d continually been thinking about riding her bike on the street, just like an adult. Now her dad was telling her she had to take the bus with Gu Mingxi. She was very, very, very unhappy!

From the Golden Compound to the bus stop, it was a 10 minute walk. Then they got after after four stops and then walked for another 5 minutes. It took a lot longer than riding the bike. Pang Qian threw a tantrum at her dad, “I don’t want to! I don’t want to! I want to ride my bike to school! I hate taking the bus! You get squeezed flat on there!”

Pang Shuisheng said, “Then what about Gu Mingxi?”

“...” Pang Qian didn’t have an answer. Finally, completely angry, she said, “I don’t care! Why does everything I do have to involve him?! So annoying!”



Pang Shuisheng couldn't handle his daughter. She was already 12 years old. He couldn't keep spanking her butt. He went next door to find Li Han to discuss it. Gu Mingxi accidentally overheard them.

Gu Mingxi walked over to his mom and Gu Guoxiang. He said, "Mom, actually... I can learn to ride a bike. Then I can ride the bike together with Pang Qian to school."

Li Han had a fright. "How can you ride a bike? How can you steer and brake?"

"Use my shoulders to steer. Actually, in the past, when Pang Pang was learning to ride the bike in the compound, I tried it too. I can ride it." Gu Mingxi bent over and moved his shoulders to demonstrate. "Braking is a bit more troublesome. But if I ride slowly, it's not a problem."

"No way!" Li Han protested strongly. "The compound is the compound, and the street is the street. There are so many cars on the street. For you, riding a bike would really be too dangerous!"

Gu Mingxi didn't pay any heed to Li Han's words. Taking advantage of the time that his parents were working during summer break, he asked Zhu Huiqiang, who also lived in the compound, about borrowing a bike. Then he called Pang Qian and Zhu Huiqiang to practice riding every day.

Zhu Huiqiang's bike was a male model. There was a bar in the front, which made it inconvenient to jump(?). He rode the bike, his body completely bent over, with his shoulders on the handlebars. He went round and round the flower garden in the compound.

He tried very hard to keep his head lifted to watch in front of him, but it was a struggle. And Pang Qian was at the side complaining, "Gu Mingxi, you're riding too slow! It's slower than a snail!"

Hearing her words, Gu Mingxi subconsciously accelerated his peddling. The bike did go faster, but it also became harder to steer. The front of the bike started shaking a lot, and he saw the wall approaching in front of him. Gu Mingxi had no way to brake, so he quickly stepped onto the ground with his feet. The rider and bike both fell to the ground.

Zhu Huiqiang and Pang Qian both ran over. Zhu Huiqiang was worried over his



bike, and Pang Qian was naturally more worried about Gu Mingxi. She helped him stand up and brushed off the dust from his body. Angrily, she said, “Stop practicing! You can’t even ride in the compound, how can you ride on the streets?!”

Gu Mingxi didn’t say anything. He just twisted his neck and rubbed his right shoulder with his chin. His eyes looked down, stubbornly.

Pang Qian thought for a moment, then suddenly said, “How about I ride the bike and take you along to school?”

“No!” Gu Mingxi responded quickly. He was already 13 years old and was getting taller. His face also wasn’t as round as it used to be, with edges starting to show up.

His voice was also a bit different. It was a bit rough, not as crisp as it once was. Under the hot sun, his forehead and nose had some sweat droplets. Pang Qian also saw that above his lip, there was a thin layer of fine hair growing.

She asked, “Why not? I’m really strong, I can carry you.”

“I’d rather walk to school than have you take me.” Gu Mingxi bit his lower lip, and got back onto the bike to practice. As if he’d been wronged, he rode really fast, scaring Zhu Huiqiang, who chased after him.

Inevitably, he fell off. Again and again. In the end, Old Zeng at the gate couldn’t watch on anymore. He confiscated Zhu Huiqiang’s bike and sent the kids home.

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When Pang Shuisheng got off work, Old Zeng stopped him and told him about the events that happened the past few days.

Although Pang Shuisheng wasn’t very cultured, he also wasn’t stupid. He thought all night long in bed. The next day, he kept drawing on the paper with his pen, kept pondering and pondering. Finally, he walked into Gu Guoxiang’s office.

Three days later, Gu Guoxiang handed a blueprint and some money to Pang Shuisheng. Pang Shuisheng took the money to buy a male model bike. He brought it back to the plant and put on his welding mask. He added some new



equipment to the bike. At the front, he added stainless steel shelves (?) so that Gu Mingxi could steer without bending all the way down. On the front wheel, near the right pedal, he added (?) brakes, so that he could stop the bike with his foot.

When Pang Qiansheng brought the bike to Gu Mingxi, he was pleasantly surprised. He tried it out and went in a few circles, not falling off even once.

September 1st, the new semester started.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi rode their bikes together to school.

From the moment he walked into the school, Gu Mingxi received countless strange looks and people were whispering about him.

This was what he'd anticipated, so he wasn't at all unhappy about it. On the other hand, it was Pang Qian who stared back at the curious eyes.

When they were parking their bikes, Pang Qian ran into Wang Tingting. Wang Tingting was her good friend from elementary school. They were also put into the same class in junior high. They were naturally very friendly with each other, whispering together along the way.

Gu Mingxi was carrying his backpack, with an even expression on his face. He walked up to Pang Qian and heard her suddenly shout out, "Really?!"

Gu Mingxi jumped in surprise. He turned to look at Pang Qian, whose face was red from excitement. She had her arm in Wang Tingting's, and kept asking, "Really? You're not lying to me? Didn't Xie Yi pay the sponsor fees to go to Fifth Middle School? Why is he studying at Origin of Flight?!"

Wang Tingting said, "It's true. My neighbor was Xie Yi's classmate. He wasn't willing to go to Fifth Middle, said it was too far away. He said that it didn't matter where he went for junior high. In the future, he would still get into First High. Ah, look, Xie Yi..."

Pang Quan turned her head to look. The first thing she saw was a red bicycle. A youth was on the bike. Like a gust of wind, with a "shua" he passed them.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 8

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 8 The Youth, Xie Yi

*Gu Mingxi's clothes are dirty. Why don't you wash them for him, Crab?*

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If you asked the girls of Thirst for Knowledge Elementary who the most special boy in their school was, almost all would give the same answer. Of course it's Gu Mingxi.

But Pang Qian was one in ten. She would write down Xie Yi.

Many years later, there would be two words that could be used to describe him. One was *gaofushuai* (lit. tall, rich, handsome). The other was *nanshen* (god or male idol).

If the 12 year old Pang Qian could grasp the meaning of those words, she would happily slap her thigh and say, "That's right, that's right! Xie Yi is a *gaofushuai*! And he's my *nanshen*!"

However, that year's 13 year old Xie Yi was still only short, rich, and handsome. And at best, he would be described as a little god.

Xie Yi, Pang Qian, and Gu Mingxi graduated at the same time from Thirst for Knowledge, but they weren't in the same class. In sixth grade, he was the school's star student. He was good looking, performed well on tests, and was talented. Every year for the school talent show, he would perform on his violin. His family was very well off. When he was in third grade, he saw the cement ping pong table the school had was in a bad state. With a wave of his father's hand, the school was sponsored with five new match-grade table tennis tables. It caused quite the stir at school.

Xie Yi was a very particular and independent boy. He did a lot of things that no one could understand the reasons for. For example, he turned down the position



of class representative, turned down the position to host the school announcements. He didn't participate in daily exercise. He turned down the offer to represent the school in various competitions.

The thing that Xie Yi was most famous for was what happened when he finished elementary school. He gave up the chance to participate in the exams for E City's foreign language academy. When this news got out, the whole grade was in an uproar.

E City's foreign language academy was like a god-like thing to the elementary students. One of the special things about it was that they didn't let just anyone take an entrance exam. You had to be recommended by your school. Often times, they would let the top 3 or 5 students from a school take the test and then accept the highest scorer.

A lot of parents, in order to get their children recommended, would do almost anything. They hired tutors to give their kids extra lessons to improve. They would try to get close to the teachers, going so far as to send them monetary gifts.

Gu Guoxiang had also once wanted to get Gu Mingxi recommended, but in the end, Li Han dissuaded him. She said, "You have to live in a dorm when you study at the foreign language academy. How can Gu Mingxi study there?"

Gu Guoxiang thought it over carefully, but could only give up the idea.

And Xie Yi, right after the teacher said they would recommend him, refused it immediately.

He said, "I don't want to take the test. That school is so remote. There's no TV to watch, no games to play. It's like going to prison. What's the point?"

Xie Yi's parents completely respected their son's opinion, and didn't force him at all.

Afterwards, of the three students that Thirst for Knowledge ended up recommending for the foreign language academy, none were admitted. When the grade supervisor got a hold of the exam papers, he quietly organized for several of the school's top students to take the same test, lying that it was just a training exercise.



After the exam, out of tens of students, only Xie Yi and Gu Mingxi scored high enough to get into the foreign language academy. Of course, they would never know about this.

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Xie Yi parked his bike and put on his backpack. He walked over, but he didn't recognize Pang Qian or Wang Tingting. He did, however, recognize Gu Mingxi. With a bright laugh, he greeted him, "Hey, Gu Mingxi! What class are you in?"

Pang Qian didn't understand the world of top students. She just stood next to Gu Mingxi, quietly watching Xie Yi.

Xie Yi really was a very pretty boy. Thick eyebrows, big eyes, red lips, white teeth. He looked a bit like the Little Tornado, Jimmy Lin. And the clothes he wore were very fashionable. His backpack and shoes both felt very foreign-styled. He was fresh and clean. His disposition seemed like it was streets ahead of the other sloppy boys in the class.

Hearing Xie Yi's question, Gu Mingxi smiled and responded, "Class 6. What about you?"

"What a coincidence, I'm class 6 as well!" Xie Yi's eyebrows jumped up, eyes shining brightly. Just then, he took notice of the two girls at Gu Mingxi's side. He smiled at them, saying, "Hi, how are you?"

Pang Qian's face flushed red in an instant. Even her manner of walking had become very reserved. Gu Mingxi gave her a strange look and asked, "Pang Pang, what's wrong?"

Pang Qian glared at him, but her heart was delighted.

She was very happy! The Xie Yi that wore a black suit, playing the violin for their art show! She and he were actually in the same class!

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Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi's junior high experience kicked off. New school, new class, new teacher, new classmates. All of it was very exciting, except— The seat that would never change in ten million years.

Pang Qian still sat with Gu Mingxi in the last row, in the corner by the window. After two weeks, the unfamiliar students in the class had already recovered from



their shock at seeing Gu Mingxi. Some students were very friendly towards Gu Mingxi, but quite a large number of students also usually didn't dare to approach Gu Mingxi. From time to time, they would even observe him. They were very curious about everything about him, wanting to see the way he used his feet to perform a task. Whenever she came across these students and their probing eyes, she would stare them down with her big, white eyes.

So, not long after school started, there were already rumors forming in the classroom. When everyone saw Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, their eyes would unintentionally glimmer and they'd banter. They all said that Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were a pair.

After hearing about this from Wang Tingting, Pang Qian became very upset.

She didn't understand. After six years of being deskmates with Gu Mingxi, no one had ever started such a rumor before. But now, after changing classes, and only after one month, these new students had already started erroneously circulating that she and Gu Mingxi were a pair.

Moreover, even Xie Yi seemed to think so.

That day, after using the restroom, Pang Qian ran into Xie Yi in the corridor. Xie Yi looked at her and then said, "Crab, tell Gu Mingxi that we're playing football later."

Thanks to Wang Tingting and their other old classmates, the new students all called Pang Qian "Crab" (*pangxie*).

Pang Qian's face was red and she said somewhat oddly, "Tell Gu Mingxi yourself."

Xie Yi flashed a knowing smile at her, saying, "Telling him or telling you, it's the same, isn't it?"

After he finished speaking, he turned and left, leaving behind a stunned and dazed Pang Qian.

After school, Gu Mingxi and a group of boys went to play football at the sports field. Pang Qian grumbled nonstop. She wanted to head home quickly to watch her cartoons, but she also was a bit worried about Gu Mingxi.



Gu Mingxi said, “Why don’t you go home first? I can ride my bike home by myself.”

Pang Qian thought it over seriously, but rejected. “No, my dad said that there are a lot of cars on the street. I have to ride back home together with you.”

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips, then said, “Then wait a little. After we finish our game, I’ll treat you to ice cream.”

Pang Qian lit up with a smile, and said, “Really? I want chocolate!”

Seeing her happy, he also smiled, “No problem.”

As the boys played football, Pang Qian sat on the side of the field, head in her hands, watching.

During this time, China’s national team was competing in the final round of the 1998 World Cup qualifications. The grouping was advantageous, the lineup was neat, and people were looking at the World Cup promisingly. This resulted in a wave of interest across the country. Even a group of 12 and 13 year old boys were very excited.

A group of youths surrounded the goal, running and kicking cluelessly, chasing after the football. Pang Qian didn’t understand the game, but with the boys kicking all over the place, she understood even less. She felt it was very boring, so her sights focused onto one person on the field.

Xie Yi ran around on the field, but sometimes he would stop to rest. He often waved his hands around, shouting out commands. And the other boys actually listened to him. Pang Qian started looking over his clothes. Xie Yi wore a red t-shirt and black shorts. The t-shirt and shorts both had a check mark on them. Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian before, this was a brand called Nike. The mall sold it, and it was pretty expensive.

Pang Qian’s best pair of shoes were Double Star brand, and Jin Ai’hua had bought them at a discount. The truth was that Jin Ai’hua had bought most of her clothes from the children’s wholesale clothing market, very few were from the mall. Unlike Gu Mingxi. All of his clothes and shoes were from the mall, and they were pretty expensive. But Pang Qian felt that, even though their clothes were similar, Gu Mingxi wasn’t as handsome as Xie Yi.



The other girls in the class all said that Gu Mingxi was good looking. Wang Tingting said before that Gu Mingxi was better looking Xie Yi. Pang Qian thought that their ideas of beauty must have some problems. How could Gu Mingxi be better looking than Xie Yi? Gu Mingxi...

When she thought of Gu Mingxi, she looked over at him. In the midst of the ten plus boys, Gu Mingxi was easily spotted. He was running with long strides, his t-shirt sleeves flapping in the wind. He was scrimmaging with the other boys. When she saw, Pang Qian broke out in a cold sweat.

He didn't have arms, but they would inevitably end up wrestling for the ball. He didn't seem to care though. When he fell down, he just got back up. He fell again and got back up again. It was like he wasn't afraid of getting hurt, just happily enjoying.

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About an hour later, the boys were tired from playing. They ran off to the side of the field in groups of twos and threes, getting ready to go home. Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi was covered in dirt from playing, even his face was dirty. She couldn't help but say, "You got your clothes all dirty. Your mom's going to scold you when you get home."

Covered in sweat, Gu Mingxi shook his head, "She won't."

His good friends, Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin were both also in Class 6. The two of them, along with Xie Yi, walked along with Gu Mingxi. Liu Hanlin said, "Gu Mingxi's clothes are dirty. Why don't you wash them for him, Crab?"

Pang Qian didn't react, and just foolishly asked, "Why would I wash them? What's it got to do with me?"

Liu Hanlin smirked and said, "Aren't you his girl..."

"Don't say nonsense!" Gu Mingxi cut off Liu Hanlin's sentence, his face reddish, looking a bit embarrassed. In that moment, Pang Qian understood.

"How stupid." She put on her backpack, and turned away in a huff to walk off. As she went, she saw Xie Yi. He was standing on the side, drinking water. As he drank, he was smiling and looking at her.

Gu Mingxi had Jian Zhe help him put his backpack on. Then he ran after Pang



Qian. She was already getting her bike. Gu Mingxi stood at her side, not sure what to say.

After Pang Qian got her bike, she looked up at him, and with a muffled voice, “What? Are you going or not? The sky’s getting dark.”

“...” Gu Mingxi said, “I haven’t changed my shoes yet. Wait a minute, okay?”

Pang Qian looked down, “Then, hurry up!”

Gu Mingxi quickly moved his shoulders, shaking his backpack off. Then he sat on the ground, bent over, and starting biting his shoelaces loose. He kicked off his shoes with his feet.

He did his best to work quickly. He used his feet to unzip his bag, then pulled out his shoes, and then put his gym shoes inside.

But when he was zipping his bag up, maybe because the zipper got caught on the cloth, it wouldn’t close. Gu Mingxi was in a bit of a rush. When he couldn’t zip the bag with his toes, he just bent his head over and used his teeth to pull at the zipper.

Pang Qian stood on the side for a long time, and finally walked over. She crouched down and helped him zip up his bag.

“Dummy,” she said.

Gu Mingxi didn’t say anything. After he put on his shoes, he stood up next to Pang Qian. Pang Qian looked up at him, and seeing the mud on his face, she naturally lifted her hand and gently wiped it off. Gu Mingxi was nearly a head taller than her. Looking down at her then, his eyes looked really calm.

It was at that moment that an explosion of screams came from behind them, “Oh, oh—” Pang Qian turned around in panic, and saw six or seven boys carrying their backpacks and clothes, heading to the bikes. It was obvious that they’d all watched the scene that had just occurred. Each of them was very excited, as if they’d caught a glimpse of a big secret.

Gu Mingxi’s face turned red. Pang Qian was extremely angry. She shouted at the group, “Oh, oh, oh! Oh yourself! So annoying! You guys are so stupid!”

And then, she saw Xie Yi in the midst of the other boys. He was still holding his



bottle, drinking water. His bright eyes were full of laughter.

On their ride home, Pang Qian ignored Gu Mingxi again. Even when Gu Mingxi tried to tempt her with chocolate ice cream, she scowled without saying anything.

To a girl in her first year of junior high, this kind of rumor wasn't something she could ignore. Whenever she heard classmates teasing about her and Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian would jump up and retaliate.

Adults say that a girl doing well in elementary school is useless. When she gets into junior high and high school, her results will slowly decline. That's because girls mature earlier than boys. It's easier for them to fall into a mess of things earlier. For example, pretty clothes and makeup products. They pay more attention to their figure, and also— There will be boys that they like.

Although this saying was biased, there was just a bit of truth to it. At least, with regards to Pang Qian, it was more or less true.

Being deskmates with Gu Mingxi for six years, Pang Qian's scores put her in the middle of the class. But after the first midterm exam in junior high, she looked down the list of scores and was so startled she almost cried.

There were 47 students in the class. The scores combined results from the language, math, and English exams. Xie Yi was first, Gu Mingxi was second.

Pang Qian was 41st.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 9

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 9 Come to My Place

*After all, you're not stupid. You're just lazy.*

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On the way home, the weather outside was clearly very nice. But Pang Qian felt like there was a great big cloud above her head. With a troubled face, she sighed. She wished she would fall off her bike and break her leg. Then she'd have to be sent to the hospital, and maybe her parents wouldn't scold her.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi returned to the Golden Compound and parked their bikes. Gu Mingxi retrieved his backpack and got it on his back, and saw Pang Qian standing by her bike. He called out, "Pang Pang, let's go."

Pang Qian looked up at him with her long face and said, "Gu Mingxi, let's go out for awhile. I don't dare to go home."

If you walk down the road in front of the Golden Compound for 10 minutes, you'll come across a big, bustling street. On that street, there's a KFC. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked inside and sat down at a corner table on the second floor.

Pang Qian pulled out her test papers from her bag. (Chinese) Language, 78 points. Math, 69 points. English, 65 points. Seeing the shocking large and small Xs all over her paper, she was thoroughly in despair.

There wasn't a parent-teacher meeting after the midterm exams, but the test papers needed to be signed by your parents. Pang Qian examined the score on her papers for a long while, and then she asked Gu Mingxi, "Do you think if this 6 was changed into an 8, it would be very obvious?"

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips. "Then how are you going to change it back when you hand it to the teacher?"

"Use correction fluid, or white tape... That won't work?" Seeing Gu Mingxi's



incredulous expression, Pang Qian pouted. She thought for a moment, then said, “Then, Gu Mingxi, how about you sign it for me? Your writing is good, you copy my dad’s signature.”

Gu Mingxi was speechless. “Then when your dad asks for the test paper, what are you going to give him?”

“I’ll just say they haven’t returned it.” Pang Qian scratched her head. In the end, she let out a “ohhh” sound. “Gu Mingxi, what do I do! How did I do so badly on the test?!”

She sobbed quietly. Gu Mingxi also didn’t know what to do, and he could only sit by her side quietly. Then someone came over with a tray and said, “Kids, are you done eating?”

Pang Qian wiped away her tears and then looked up. She realized it was peak mealtime and the KFC was packed full. Some people thought they were taking up a spot without ordering anything, but she still didn’t want to go home. So she said, “We still haven’t eaten yet!”

The person with a tray looked at them suspiciously. Gu Mingxi felt a bit embarrassed and said, “Pang Pang, why don’t we go home?”

“Why, I came to eat.” Pang Qian stood up. There were still some tears hanging on the corners of her eyes. She asked Gu Mingxi, “What do you want to eat? I’ll go down to buy it.”

Seeing her say that, the people waiting for a seat could only walk away. Gu Mingxi looked up at her and asked, “You really want to eat?”

“Mm,” Pang Qian nodded. “When we got here, I wasn’t hungry. But it smells really good in here, so I’m hungry now.”

“Then just buy a little something. I’m not eating.” Gu Mingxi thought again and then asked, “Do you have enough money?”

Pang Qian sniffled, pulled out a 10 dollar bill from her pocket and said, “Yeah.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian bought a small fries and also an ice cream cone. She looked at the few coins she got back and felt distressed. 10 dollars was her whole week’s



allowance. And in an instant, most of it was gone.

The two of them sat there, taking up the table. Pang Qian was licking her ice cream as she compared her test papers to Gu Mingxi's.

He got full points in math! Full points! Is he really human?! She felt so defeated and frustrated inside, even as she kept on her stubborn facade.

"I could have solved this question. This is what I thought, but I don't know why, when I was solving it, it ended up being wrong. That was 5 points!" When she finished her ice cream, she picked up a fry, dipped it in ketchup, and then started looking over another question. "Oh, this one was really B? I thought it either had to be B or D. Oh...bad luck."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian picked up another fry, dipped it in ketchup, and brought it to Gu Mingxi's lips. "Ah, open up."

Gu Mingxi's body recoiled, and quickly took a look around. Only when he found that no one had been watching them did he take a bite, face red.

"Just eat by yourself, I don't want any," he said very quietly as he chewed.

Pang Qian glanced at him, "I bought it to eat together."

He didn't say another word. When Pang Qian finished looking over his math and language exams, she stared at the English exam. During this process, she very fairly distributed the fries. She would eat one, and then she would feed Gu Mingxi one. But she was still a little selfish. Each time she dipped Gu Mingxi's fry in ketchup, she dipped very little.

"How come you can get 98 points on English?" Pang Qian couldn't understand. "Why did I do so much worse than you? We started learning English at the same time."

Gu Mingxi didn't say anything. Pang Qian continued, "But, Xie Yi's better than you. He scored full points!"

This made Gu Mingxi unhappy. He said, "I could have gotten full points, but I just made a small mistake."

"You're still showing off!" Pang Qian angrily stuffed a fry into his mouth,



saying, “Blame your desk for being so low! I couldn’t see your paper at all during the exam! We sit in the corner. If you just let me see a little, I wouldn’t have done so poorly!”

Gu Mingxi licked his lips. There was a little ketchup there, a little sweet, a little sour. With a rigid voice, he said, “Even if you looked this time and got a high score, what would you do when you’re taking your high school entrance exam?”

“...” Pang Qian pushed away the papers, and in a tone that said she was wronged, “Entrance exam?! I’ll think about that when it comes!”

Gu Mingxi looked at her for a long time. Then he suddenly asked, “Pang Pang, do you do the preview, review, dictation, and recitation exercises that the teacher gives?”

Pang Qian glared at him, “Of course I do them!”

“Really?” Gu Mingxi was still staring at her, his eyes carrying a trace of disbelief. With him looking at her like that, Pang Qian shrunk and said quietly, “You know that I don’t do the previews and reviews. And the dictations... I just copy them. My radio is broken, and the tape won’t go in. My parents can’t read it. As for recitation... Sometimes I’ll do it for a little bit.”

It probably had to do with their family education. Gu Mingxi’s mom finished high school, and his dad finished college. If Gu Guosheng were younger and still working on getting his engineering certifications, he would also have to participate in professional exams every so often. He even had to prepare academic papers. Gu Guoxiang was always very upright with his studying habits, and his enthusiasm for it was also passed on to Gu Mingxi. In their home study, Gu Guoxiang had an innumerable amount of books. When Gu Mingxi was in kindergarten, Li Han started to teach him how to read, by giving him simple books to read. During his year of recovery after his amputation, Gu Mingxi read a lot of books, in addition to learning to use his feet to do things. At the time, although he didn’t recognize that many characters (or words), it still influenced and increased his thirst for knowledge and enthusiasm for learning.

Additionally, Gu Guoxiang and Li Han had told Gu Mingxi many times. Because he didn’t have arms, studying was the only road he could take.

But Pang Qian’s family was different. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai’hua both only



finished junior high. Jin Ai'hua relied on self-studying to become a cashier. While raising their daughter, the two of them only cared for her results, but never taught her the method or attitude toward studying. Elementary school homework was easy, so Pang Qian got by just on her smarts alone. But now in junior high, she was met with subjects like English that required a lot of effort spent to memorize things. Of course, the lazy Pang Qian wouldn't get good marks.

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There was only one fry left in the paper bag. Pang Qian stared at it for a long time. Then she picked it up, dipped it in ketchup, and then brought it to Gu Mingxi's lips. Gu Mingxi smiled at her, eyes bright, "You eat it."

Pang Qian looked at him and blinked. Then she retracted her hand and stuffed the fry into her own mouth.

Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, in the future, do you want to come over to my house and do homework together?"

Pang Qian looked at him absentmindedly. Gu Mingxi continued, "My desk is too low for you to use, but we have a folding table. We can bring it into my room for you to use. We can do the dictations together, and practice speaking in English with each other. When you're doing math and don't understand something, I can explain it to you."

Pang Qian was still a bit hesitant. Because she knew that Gu Mingxi was actually very strict about studying. Usually, he wouldn't let her copy his homework, but he'd rather explain it to her. Unless there was no more time to get the work done and Pang Qian was so rushed that she went to extremes and forced Gu Mingxi, there was no way that he'd let her copy his homework.

Seeing that she didn't respond, Gu Mingxi continued more, "That... You might not know yet, but at the end of the semester, they switch up the classes. We're in the fast class, but the the bottom ranked students will be moved into Class 5. If you're dropped into Class 5, I suspect... Your dad will scold you."

In that moment, Pang Qian was really given a scare. Being dropped into the next class because your scores were too low is really too big a hit to your pride. If she were kicked out of Class 6, Pang Shuisheng wouldn't scold her. He'd just



beat her to death!

When Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went home, it was already dark. Standing outside Apt. 501, Pang Qian was very frightened, and she grabbed onto Gu Mingxi's sleeve, refusing to let go. "Gu Mingxi, does this exam really need to be signed by my dad?"

He shook his head, "No."

Pang Qian was ecstatic, "Really?"

He said seriously, "You can have your mom sign it."

Pang Qian was depressed.

"Gu Mingxi, I'm dead. Come back later to pick up my corpse."

Her shoulders dropped in defeat as she readied herself to walk through the door. Gu Mingxi stopped her, "Pang Pang."

"Hm?" Pang Qian turned around.

Gu Mingxi walked in front of her, his shoulders moving slightly. He turned to the side and nudged her with his damaged shoulders, "Listen to me. In the future, come to my house to do homework. I promise, you'll never score as badly on your exams again."

Pang Qian raised her head to look at him. Gu Mingxi looked as he always did, calm eyes, standing in front of her, a light smile on his face. Although Pang Qian spent every day with him, but she realized that she'd never actually taken a close look at his face. Her eyes traveled across his face as she looked at his features. Suddenly, a thought popped into Pang Qian's mind. It seemed that there weren't any problems with the girls in her class after all. Gu Mingxi was really rather good looking.

Gu Mingxi watched as Pang Qian's face started to turn red for some reason. He was very confused, and called out to her. Pang Qian came back to her senses and asked, "Will I be able to rank in the top 20 on the final exam?"

"Yes," Gu Mingxi nodded satisfactorily, like he was cheering her on. "But you have to listen to me. You can't be lazy and try to copy my homework."

"..." Pang Qian asked, "What if I don't score well enough?"



“That won’t happen,” Gu Mingxi shook his head. “After all, you’re not stupid. You’re just lazy.”

Pang Qian, “...”

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That evening, Li Han carried some grapefruit into Gu Mingxi’s room. She asked, “Mingxi, is Qian Qian having some trouble at school?”

“No,” Gu Mingxi said. “What’s wrong, Mom?”

“I was just hanging some clothes to dry on the balcony, and I heard your Uncle Pang scolding her. Qian Qian was crying very loudly. It sounded like she was even beat.”

The words had just come out of her mouth, and Gu Mingxi already ran out. He stood on the balcony, and faintly heard “pa, pa” sounds from next door. There was also faint sounds of an angry Pang Shuisheng and the wah-wah cries of Pang Qian.

Gu Mingxi wasn’t sure where Pang Qian was getting beaten. Her bottom? Her palms? Or was he slapping her? He recalled the time that Gu Guoxiang had slapped him. That was the first, and the only, time that he’d hit him. That slap had really hurt. His face was swollen for two days. Gu Mingxi lowered his eyes, thinking of how much pain Pang Qian must be feeling that she would cry so loudly.

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The next day, after Pang Qian finished dinner, she brought her backpack over to Gu Mingxi’s house.

Gu Guoxiang looked coldly on at Gu Mingxi’s “warm-heartedness.” Li Han was very welcoming to Pang Qian though. She thanked this little girl from the bottom of her heart. Ever since Gu Mingxi’s injury, this girl had always stayed his side. It was really like something between blood siblings.

Li Han brought the folding table into Gu Mingxi’s room. She even prepared a comfy chair for Pang Qian. Lastly, she brought in a plate of cookies, a bowl of cut up slices of dragon fruit, and two cups of hot orange juice. Then she backed out of the room with a smile.



This kind of treatment made Pang Qian feel very flattered. Her attention was already on the plate of cookies. Not waiting for Gu Mingxi to start talking, she'd already grabbed one and started eating.

"This cookie is really good." She sat on the chair, happily swinging her legs back and forth. She took a sip of the orange juice and frowned, "Aiya, hot, hot!"

Gu Mingxi looked at her silently. Suddenly he raised his legs onto very low desk. With his big toe, he opened his cassette player and put in the English tape. He said, "Stop eating, let's do the diction exercise first."

Pang Qian, "..."

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, "Take out your English book. First, write down what you can. Whatever you can't write out, go back to memorize it until you can write it out. Then we'll practice conversing, then do our English homework. Then we'll do math last. You can do your Chinese homework when you go home."

Pang Qian was in a daze. Gu Mingxi turned and leaned back in his chair. Using his foot, he opened one of his desk drawers. Then he pulled out a new English workbook. He tossed it to Pang Qian's table with his right foot. Then he picked up a pen with his toes.

"Listen and write. Get ready, go."

Pang Qian held half a cookie in her left hand and a glass of orange juice in her right. She saw as Gu Mingxi pressed down on the tape player's play button with his heel.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 10

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 10 He's Growing Up

*Gu Mingxi, your toenails have gotten long.*

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What's done cannot be undone. Pang Qian finally understood what that phrase meant. She thought she just had to eat until she was full and that was all. As if being tortured by the teacher in school all day wasn't enough, she also had to go over to Gu Mingxi's house in the evenings and suffer. After five nights of doing homework at Gu Mingxi's, Pang Qian suggested she stop going, but Gu Mingxi wouldn't allow it.

"No," he said solemnly. "I didn't realize that your foundation was so bad. Pang Pang, how much time do you usually spend on homework each day?"

Pang Qian couldn't answer. Her evenings usually went like this: Watch an episode of a cartoon after school. Then eat dinner. After she ate, she would flip through a magazine—The metals company would give their employees some money each year to order some newspapers or magazines. In the Pang household, Pang Shuisheng ordered the E City Evening Press, and then also ordered two monthly comics for Pang Qian.

It was usually past 7 o'clock when she finished going through the magazines. Her TV shows started then. Pang Qian always dallied and lied in her parents' room to watch TV dramas. It wasn't until Pang Shuisheng finally asked her, "Did you finish your homework?" that she would gloomily return to her room.

She'd spend an hour randomly doing her homework, and then she'd wash up and get ready for bed.

Even before sleeping, she wasn't entirely honest. She would tell her mom that she wanted to listen to her English cassettes, but her cassette player was already



broken. She could only listen to the radio with it. Pang Qian would hide under her covers, ears plugged, listening to various music programs. Occasionally, she would listen to “Warm Harbor” at 10 o’clock.

A lot of people called in to the host, sharing all about the troublesome things in their life. Sometimes they would ask health questions. Pang Qian’s unprecedented curiosity would burst forth at that point. She would listen attentively to the callers’ questions, even though there were a lot of questions she didn’t understand.

There was one question that she’d heard asked many times before, but she could never figure out quite what it meant. So she took advantage of her time going to school with Gu Mingxi to humbly ask him.

“Gu Mingxi, do you know what a wet dream is?”

Gu Mingxi was steering with his shoulders on the metal contraption. After hearing Pang Qian’s question, his bike swerved, and he immediately braked with his right foot, stopping the bicycle in its tracks.

Pang Qian was also startled. After she stopped her bike, she noticed Gu Mingxi’s complexion was a bit strange. His cheeks were completely flushed. She asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Gu Mingxi started peddling his bike. Pang Qian chased after him, asking, “You didn’t answer my question. What’s a wet dream?”

Gu Mingxi’s response was slightly muffled, “Don’t know.”

“...” Pang Qian felt that he was just putting on airs. She pouted, not too happy. Then she asked, “Then... Then do you know what premature ejaculation is? Or nocturnal penile tumescence (colloq. morning wood)?”

Gu Mingxi was getting stressed about it, and shouted at Pang Qian, “I don’t know! You’re being so ridiculous! If you have the time to ask these kinds of questions, why don’t you do a few more math problems?!”

Pang Qian replied unhappily, “I was just asking. If you don’t know, then you don’t know. What’s there to shout about? You’re the one being ridiculous! Hmph!”



After she finished speaking, she started accelerated her peddling and charged ahead.

“Pang Qian—” Gu Mingxi called from behind, unable to chase after her. It already wasn’t an easy feat for him to ride a bike. He wasn’t going to impulsively play around with his life on the line.

Following his own pace, Gu Mingxi peddled slowly to school. After he arrived, he realized Pang Qian was waiting for him at the gate. He got off his bike, bent over against the metal stand on his bike and pushed it forward with his shoulders. Pang Qian watched him, pouting. When Gu Mingxi walked over to her, he lightly kicked her on the leg with his heel, “Let’s go, we’ll be late.”

Pang Qian didn’t move, and was unable to stop herself from laughing.

After the two of them parked their bikes, they walked up the building. She kept on asking, “Gu Mingxi, are you sure you don’t know what a wet dream is? I heard Teacher Jia say that boys will usually start having them when they’re 11 or 12. I just don’t know what it means.”

Teacher Jia was the male host of “Warm Harbor.” Nearly at the point of collapse, Gu Mingxi thought for a moment. He spoke very quietly into Pang Qian’s ear, “It’s a physiological issue for males. You don’t need to understand it. Pang Pang, you’re a girl. In the future, don’t go asking these questions to other boys. It will make people think you’re...very low class.”

“You’re the low class one!” Pang Qian jumped. “I really don’t understand! On the radio, people always ask, ‘Teacher Jia, I have wet dreams every night.’ Or else, it’s ‘Every day, I have morning wood.’ I don’t understand and it’s so annoying!”

She was in an uproar. Gu Mingxi looked around nervously. Then he glared at her, “Be quiet. Don’t you know how to be embarrassed!”

The innocent knows no fear. Pang Qian didn’t know what he was afraid of. She said righteously, “What’s there to be embarrassed about?! It’s not like I’ve never seen a birdie (slang for penis) before. Gu Mingxi, don’t forget, when we were younger, we bathed together every day. I’ve even played with your birdie before!”



Their noisy, lively days continued. Their evening study sessions also continued. And one day, during a unit test in math class, Pang Qian looked at her sheet of questions and suddenly realized that they weren't that hard.

This time, she scored 87 points, her position jumping up to the middle ranks. She was elated. At lunch, she generously treated Gu Mingxi to a can of Jianlibao (soft drink).

As a result, she no longer refused to go to Gu Mingxi's house to study. After all, under his supervision, her homework (scores?) had gradually increased. Everyone started learning English in junior high, everyone had the same starting line. As Pang Qian was about to fall behind, Gu Mingxi pulled her back up. Every day, he would make her recite things and practice dictation. He even told her about the grammar rules. After awhile, Pang Qian didn't feel like her teacher was speaking in some other-worldly language during English class anymore. And occasionally, when she was called on to answer a question, she could actually do it just the same.

There was also another important reason. Pang Qian loved to go to Gu Mingxi's house, and that's because— Li Han would always prepare a place of fruit and snacks and a warm drink. To Pang Qian, that was the world's most difficult thing to resist!

The weather started to gradually cool. Winter would soon be arriving.

After eating dinner that evening, Pang Qian was worried that her hair wouldn't dry if she washed it too late. So she washed her hair and bathed first, before bringing her homework over to Gu Mingxi's house.

When she went in his room, she felt that it was abnormally warm. Then she realized that Li Han had pushed a space heater into Gu Mingxi's room, to give them some warmth.

"Wow, it's so warm and comfortable." Pang Qian sat down in the chair with a heartfelt sigh.

When Gu Mingxi turned around, this was the scene he was met with.



A girl who had just washed, long hair that was still wet and loose. It hadn't been combed, so it was a bit messy. Her face was flushed from the heat, eyes shining brightly. She was smiling as she picked up a piece of mung bean cake and flipped open her notebook.

Gu Mingxi has always liked watching Pang Qian eat because she always had a face full of enjoyment, an almost intoxicated look. It would always give Gu Mingxi a feeling of happiness.

With a ladylike gesture, using only her thumb, forefinger and middle finger, Pang Qian picked up a piece of mung bean cake and brought it to her mouth before taking a bite. She closed her eyes and let out an "ooh" sound, shaking her head slightly from delight. When she took a second bite, some crumbs fell down. She moved her other hand to quickly catch it. The crumbs kept falling, so she quickly finished off the piece of cake in her hand. Then she tilted her head back and brushed the remaining crumbs from her hand into her mouth.

Gu Mingxi saw that her hand. And maybe because she had just washed up, but her entire person seemed especially pale. Those small hands, thin fingers, her nails short and round and a healthy pink color.

It looked really nice.

Pang Qian had finished eating cake and was about to start her homework, when she lifted her head and saw Gu Mingxi. Seeing his stiff expression, she said, "Hey, what are you daydreaming about?"

Gu Mingxi came back to his senses, his face turning completely red in an instant. Pang Qian blinked at him and asked, "Are you very hot?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head, then turned his body back to his desk. His legs were raised up on his desk, a ballpoint sandwiched between his toes. His back faced Pang Qian.

Pang Qian used her hand to fan herself and said, "Actually, a space heater makes it really hot. If I had known earlier, I wouldn't have worn a jacket over."

She slipped off her jacket very naturally. Inside, she had on her pajamas. It was boatnecked with a pink pig pattern. After she took off her jacket, she felt much more comfortably.



During this homework session, Gu Mingxi felt a bit absent. He wanted to finish quickly, but Pang Qian wanted to continue.

While he was explaining the math problems, her attention suddenly diverted from the board to his feet. She said, “Gu Mingxi, your toenails have gotten long.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian, “Where are your nail clippers? I’ll help you trim them.”

Gu Mingxi replied stiffly, “No need, I can cut them myself.”

Pang Qian disapproved, “When you cut it yourself, it’s really slow. Aiya, I’ll help you cut them.”

She was pretty familiar with his room, so she stood up and walked over to the bookshelf, and took out his nail clippers from a small box. Sitting down next to Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian pulled his legs over. She bent over and started clipping his toe nails.

“Kacha, kacha” sounds floated in the air. Gu Mingxi felt his mind was a bit dizzy. He forced himself to look at his feet, but couldn’t stop himself from looking at Pang Qian’s hands. Her soft, white hands were lightly holding onto his feet then, helping him clip his toe nails.

It wasn’t the first time she’d helped him. Ever since Pang Qian learned how to clip toenails, she’d always look at Gu Mingxi’s feet. Whenever his toenails were just a little long, she would wave her nail clippers, proclaiming that she would help him cut them, as if it were some kind of interesting game.

This game had progressed three levels.

The first stage was that she wanted to help him, but he wasn’t willing.

The second stage was when he wanted her to help him, but she wasn’t willing.

They were in the third stage now. He wasn’t willing, and she wasn’t willing. So, actually, Pang Qian hadn’t helped Gu Mingxi cut his nails in a long time.

Gu Mingxi’s line of sight moved from Pang Qian’s hands to her body. He suddenly thought that, with Pang Qian bent over, her head lowered, and the collar of her pajamas hanging slightly, against the darkness of her hair that was



draped over her shoulders, her skin looked even more snow-white. There was a boom that went off in Gu Mingxi's head. Although he hadn't really seen the scene inside her clothes, but just imagining it was enough to make his whole body go stiff.

Afterwards, Pang Qian was shooed home by Gu Mingxi. She didn't understand, and kept feeling that Gu Mingxi was very weird that entire day.

Gu Mingxi went to bed very early that evening. But he kept rolling back and forth, unable to sleep, and just laid there. It was the middle of the night when he finally drifted off to sleep, and he had a dream.

In his dream, he was still very little. He was standing inside of a large wooden bathtub and washing.

Washing and washing and washing. Then, in front of his eyes, a little chubby girl appeared. The girl sat down in the bathtub, naked. She tilted her head and looked up at him curiously.

Gu Mingxi suddenly felt a bit embarrassed. He wanted to reach out his hand to cover up his little birdie, but after moving around his shoulders, he realized he didn't have any arms. Gu Mingxi felt very vexed. His little birdie wasn't very far from the girl's face, her eyes doubtful, as she stared at this little swinging thing. And then she reached out her hand and grabbed it—

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Gu Mingxi suddenly woke up, and he realized he was still lying in bed. Only... He realized his underpants were wet.

He didn't dare to move, confusion filling his mind. He realized that something had changed *there*, and it was hard, resting against the bed. Gu Mingxi felt extremely ashamed, because he realized that lying there in that posture was actually very comfortable.

He gingerly moved his body. The small friction brought a wonderful feeling, which made him even more scared. He laid there with his eyes open, his body in his covers, his heart booming like thunder. After an unknown amount of time, the throbbing in his heart finally vanished. His body was covered in sweat. He twisted his body and threw his covers off, slowly sitting up.



Using his foot, he turned on the light at the head of his bed. He bent over to inspect his underwear. There was a thick liquid there, and it had soaked through the crotch on his underpants.

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips and sat in a daze for awhile. Then he let out a huff, “Don’t ask for help,” before changing his underwear.

His shirt had also been soaked with sweat, so he changed his clothes as well. He took off his wet clothes and headed to his dresser to get some dry ones, when he suddenly saw himself in his dresser mirror.

His upper body was bare, and he was only wearing a pair of underpants. His skin was pale, his body thin and lean, with a pair of slender and well proportioned legs. At this time, Gu Mingxi was only 13 years old and 4 months, just the time when children’s bodies grew. Li Han had said before that all his pants would become too short after wearing them for just two months. And as they bought shoes, they had to buy him bigger ones as well.

Gu Mingxi knew that he was growing up. His body was going through a number of changes. There were many things that couldn’t be avoided. For example, what had just happened when he was sleeping.

However, compared to other boys, it was undeniable that Gu Mingxi would have more confusion, hesitation, and fear.

It was the deep of night, silence in the air. The young boy stood in front of his dresser mirror, and seeing his deformed body, he let out a sigh. He put on clean clothes, turned off the light, and went back to bed.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 11

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 11 Christmas Present

*Xie Yi's too cool! He's just too cool!*

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Before Christmas, Pang Qian, Wang Tingting and Zhang Wei went to the stationary store to buy Christmas cards. Each of the card booths were piled high with a hill of cards. The three girls crowded around, carefully picking out cards.

Wang Tingting asked Pang Qian, "Crab, how many are you planning to send?"

Pang Qian said, "I'm sending one to all the girls, but for the ones I'm not close with, I'll just send them 50 cent ones." She picked up a really nice looking Korean greeting card and looked at the price sticker. She pointed it out to Wang Tingting, "This one's 2 dollars, I'll just send it to you guys."

Zhang Wei said, "That's what I'm thinking too. Oh yeah, Crab, are you sending any to the boys?"

Pang Qian thought for a moment, then said, "I'll probably buy a few. At the least, I have to send one to Gu Mingxi."

Wang Tingting and Zhang Wei laughed. Pang Qian glared at them, "What are you laughing at?!"

Zhang Wei pulled Pang Qian's hand and asked, "Crab, does Gu Mingxi like you?"

"No way!" Pang Qian said, taking offense. "He and I are neighbors. His parents and my parents are coworkers. We just grew up together."

"Then you already knew him before he lost his arms?" Zhang Wei was Pang Qian's good friend who she met in junior high. She didn't understand the history of Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, so she was still very curious about him.



Pang Qian nodded her head after a moment, “Mm.”

“Oh?” Zhang Wei asked excitedly, “Then, before he lost his arms, what was he like? I heard that his arms were destroyed by an electrical transformer. How can a transformer be that powerful?! Oh, and when he lost his arms, did you see it? Was he in a lot of pain? Did he cry?”

Pang Qian was a bit unhappy, and with a muffled voice, “I’ve forgotten.”

Zhang Wei was going to continue asking, but she was stopped by Wang Tingting. Wang Tingting said, “Don’t talk about Gu Mingxi anymore. Let’s hurry and pick out our cards. Ah, Zhang Wei, didn’t you say that you were going to buy a really pretty card for Xie Yi?”

Zhang Wei blushed and said, “Mm. Aside from Xie Yi, I also have to buy a nice one for Gu Mingxi. Crab, do you know what kind of card Gu Mingxi would like?”

Pang Qian, “...”

Zhang Wei asked again, “Do you know what color he likes?”

Of course Pang Qian knew. Gu Mingxi’s favorite color is blue, that kind of pure and deep blue, as deep as the vast ocean. He also liked light yellow. The cup he drank from was that kind of light yellow. Pang Qian even made fun of him, saying it was girly.

Not entirely sure of her own intent, Pang Qian said to Zhang Wei, “Gu Mingxi’s favorite color is black. He thinks the color’s really cool.”

Oh! God in heaven above, please forgive her for lying.

Black was the color Gu Mingxi disliked the most. He once told Pang Qian that the color black puts him in a very bad mood.

After hearing Pang Qian’s response, Zhang Wei was a little uncertain. “Where would I be able to buy a black card?”

Pang Qian shrugged, “You can buy something else. Red or green would both be fine.”

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On Christmas day, when Pang Qian arrived at school, she gave out a card to each girl in her class. After seeing Pang Qian make her way around the class and



back to her seat, Gu Mingxi was so excited that his face was completely flushed.

A bit later, Zhang Wei walked over to their desk, with her hands behind her back. From behind her, she pulled out a card for Pang Qian, “Crab, Merry Christmas.”

“Thanks!” Pang Qian happily accepted it. She saw that Zhang Wei was still standing there, twisting back and forth a little. And from behind her again, she pulled out a card to give to Gu Mingxi, “Gu Mingxi, Merry Christmas.”

Gu Mingxi was a bit surprised, and hesitated for a moment. Zhang Wei looked at Gu Mingxi’s legs resting on his desk, and then saw the sleeves hanging from his shoulders. A bit embarrassed, she placed the card onto his desk, and then ran off with a red face.

Zhang Wei really had some kind of magic power. That card was actually black. With some guilt, Pang Qian laid on her desk, secretly looking at Gu Mingxi. But Gu Mingxi calmly used his foot to put the card into his backpack, not even opening it to see inside.

And then, one after another, seven or eight girls also came to give Gu Mingxi a card. Pang Qian was stunned. Looking at the envelopes of the card, you could already tell that they weren’t cheap.

She suddenly realized that Gu Mingxi was actually pretty popular.

Pang Qian wasn’t being idle either. During the class break, she pulled out a card from her backpack to give to Xie Yi. She’d been watching, and a lot of girls had already given Xie Yi a card, so another one from her wasn’t a bit deal.

She ducked under her desk and pulled out her card, checking it once more to make sure she didn’t misspell any words. After she put the card back into its envelope, she turned and saw a deep stare from her deskmate.

Gu Mingxi’s expression was very strange! Pang Qian looked at him a bit guiltily and without a sound, she stood up and lightly stepped around the room to Xie Yi’s desk.

Xie Yi was chatting with the boy behind him. When he heard Pang Qian call him, he turned around, his expression the same.



“Xie-xie Yi.” Pang Qian stuttered and blushed as she handed her card to him, “Me-merry Christmas.”

The boy beside him let out a jeer. Xie Yi graciously accepted her card with a smile, “Thanks, Crab.”

Pang Qian scratched her head and gathered her courage to ask, “Xie Yi, are you going to perform your violin at the arts concert in a few days?”

“Huh?” Xie Yi chuckled as he looked at her, and then asked, “Why do you ask?”

“I saw all of your performances in elementary school. It always sounded really nice, oh oh oohh.” Pang Qian smiled foolishly. “If you were to perform this year, our class would definitely win first place.”

Xie Yi stood up, leaning on his desk, spinning a pen in his hands. Lazily, he said, “I don’t play violin to win first place. I really like to play violin.”

“Ah...” Pang Qian nodded. “I like to listen to you play too. I think you’re really good at it!”

“Have you learned it before?”

Pang Qian shook her head, “No.”

Xie Yi smiled again and said, “A few days ago, Teacher Cao asked me about it, if I’d be willing to participate. I thought it wasn’t good for me to always take the class’ chance to perform, so I rejected.”

Pang Qian felt it was such a shame, “Then...”

Xie Yi suddenly winked at her, smiling, “But, if you want to listen to it, I’ll ask Teacher Cao about it again and see if I can be added. It’s just a few minutes of time, so it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Pang Qian was all excited, “Really?!”

“Mm.” The way Xie Yi held his arm, leaning against his desk, looked especially chic. “My violin teacher said that playing the violin for a good friend, when someone wants to hear it, it makes the violin happy.”

When Pang Qian returned to her seat, her whole person felt like it was floating. She happily prepared for her next class, even humming along to a song. Gu



Mingxi kept silent the whole time. Even when he turned to look at her, she didn't notice. He finally turned back and pulled out a math workbook with his foot, silently doing math problems.

After enjoying herself for awhile, Pang Qian poked Gu Mingxi's leg with her pen. "What are you doing?"

"Math." He turned in avoidance and answered quietly.

"Hey, Gu Mingxi, give me your pencil box."

"Why?"

Pang Qian already bent over and grabbed his pencil case near his feet. The contents of Gu Mingxi's pencil case were very simple. There wasn't any fancy stationary. Pang Qian looked at this and then that, and finally returned his case.

Gu Mingxi asked her, "What are you looking at?"

"Nothing." Pang Qian rested her chin in her hands and smiled at him. Her eyes and her smile made it clear that she was in a very good mood.

Gu Mingxi's mood, on the other hand, turned a bit sour. But he didn't say anything, only turning away again.

Up until school ended, Gu Mingxi still hadn't received Pang Qian's card. He felt a bit disappointed, but didn't let it show in his expression. He tidied his bag and got ready to go home. He pulled out a small box from his inside his backpack, and pushed it in front of Pang Qian.

"I didn't buy you a card. Here's a small present. Pang Pang, Merry Christmas."

Pang Qian was pleasantly surprised, but when she opened the box, her whole body froze, looking at it.

Gu Mingxi seeing her strange reaction, asked, "You don't like it?"

"..." Pang Qian giggled. "No, I like it. Thank you."

That evening, when Pang Qian brought her homework over to Gu Mingxi's house, he finally found out why she had such a strange reaction to his present in the afternoon.

Because Pang Qian brought over a small, wrapped up box and gave it to Gu



Mingxi. Sitting cross-legged at his desk, he unfolded his legs and opened the box with his feet. He was surprised to find that inside the box, there was a deep blue Hero fountain pen.

He had also gifted Pang Qian a fountain pen. Other than it being red, the style, brand, and packaging was exactly the same as the pen that Pang Qian had given him.

He lifted his head and looked at her suspiciously. Pang Qian said, somewhat downcast, “I didn’t buy you a card either. I thought it didn’t hold much meaning. My dad brought this pen back a few days ago, and he said it was pretty expensive. You can’t buy it anywhere either. I pleaded with him for days before I got it. I wanted to give it to you as a Christmas present, since you love using fountain pens. And then I was in such a rush this morning... I forgot it.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian said anxiously, “I really had it prepared in advance. Look, I already wrapped it a few days ago. I personally wrapped it! When I first saw the present you gave me, I was really shocked. I kept thinking about there could be such a coincidence.”

“It’s not a coincidence,” Gu Mingxi said. “These pens were specially ordered by the metals company to give out to clients for their 30th anniversary. The company’s logo is engraved on the pen too, but you probably didn’t notice. My dad has one that he uses. I tried it out and it was pretty nice, so I asked him to help bring another one back. To give to you.”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi looked down at the pen between his toes, thinking, so there was a blue one too. He rubbed the fountain pen with his big toe. He lifted his head, and suddenly a smile broke out. “Pang Pang, thank you for your present. I really like it.”

It was still early when they finished their homework. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian talked for awhile about the recently popular cartoons and TV series. Gu Mingxi’s eyes were focused on the pen again. He suddenly asked Pang Qian, “Pang Pang, did you know that the factory is moving?”



Pang Qian didn't know at all. Surprised, she looked up at him, "Ah?! Where is it moving to?"

"West of the city. It's pretty far away, about an hour and a half away by car." Gu Mingxi said, "My dad has already gone there to see. Starting next year, he's going to work there. In about two years, the whole factory will be moved there."

"What about this place then?" Pang Qian was eating a lollipop as she asked, "It's so far! How can my parents go to work?"

"I don't know either," Gu Mingxi shook his head. "My dad said that when the factory was being built here, this was still considered the suburbs. But the city slowly developed and got bigger. Now we're at the center of the city, so it's not that appropriate to have the factory here."

He paused for a moment, and then said hesitantly, "There's something else... Pang Pang, I heard my dad say that they're putting up a new dorm near the new factory. It will have elevators, and the houses will be much bigger than here. I'm probably going to have to move later."

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Before New Year's, the Origin of Flight's New Year's performance show was held in their school auditorium.

Before the performance started, Pang Qian went to the washroom. In the corridor outside the auditorium, she ran into Xie Yi and their head teacher, Teacher Cao. They were in the midst of a dispute. Curious, Pang Qian involuntarily walked past them.

Teacher Cao was holding a white suit in his hands. Xie Yi was carrying his violin case, strongly speaking to Teacher Cao about something.

When Pang Qian walked closer to them, she heard him say, "I'm definitely not going to wear this! I can't wear this kind of clothes to play violin!"

Teacher Cao said, "Then why didn't you prepare your own suit! Did you really plan to perform in your down jacket?"

Xie Yi responded loudly, "Why can't I?!"

"Then why can't you wear this white suit?"



“I’ll look like a clown if I wear that! A laughable clown!” Xie Yi stepped back and waved his hands at Teacher Cao. “If I have to wear that suit, then I can’t perform!”

When Pang Qian returned to the auditorium, her heart was beating nonstop.

The scene she just saw left her very shocked. Although Pang Qian wasn’t an honor student, she was respectful and listened to the teacher. This was even more true of Gu Mingxi. He was always an obedient kid, and never brought any troubles to the teachers.

Pang Qian never knew that there would be someone who dared to rebel against their teacher, speaking back so loudly to them.

When it was Xie Yi’s turn to perform, Pang Qian grew very anxious, wondering whether or not Xie Yi would put on the white suit. Actually, Pang Qian wasn’t sure why he was so adamant against wearing the suit. She only saw that there was some gold pattern on the hem and cuffs. It would look nice, wouldn’t it?

In the midst of the audience’s applause, a youth carried a violin and walked slowly onto the stage. The stage lights were all focused on him. Pang Qian felt that her heart was about to jump out of her throat.

Xi Yi was wearing his own black down jacket. You could see his fluffy collar. Under that, he was wearing dark blue jeans and sneakers.

With a kind of grace, he lifted the violin to his shoulder. He raised his bow, and then it was like his fingers were dancing. And a melodious song flowed out.

Pang Qian subconsciously started tugging at Gu Mingxi’s sleeve beside her. She pulled tightly, murmuring, “Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi! Xie Yi’s too cool, too cool! He’s just too cool!”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 12

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 12 Final Exams

*Pang Qian, you can't use him!*

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Not too long after the school performance, it was time for final exams.

Pang Qian couldn't have been any more nervous. After all, they would be readjusting the classes after this exam. And at the midterm exams, she was ranked 7th from the bottom. No matter how you looked at it, she was part of the “poor students” group.

But Pang Qian had her pride. Gu Mingxi wasn't only ranked 2nd in the class, he was 2nd in their whole grade. As his deskmate, how could Pang Qian rank bottom of the class? So Pang Qian was much more attentive towards this exam than she'd ever been for any exam before.

What was strange was that Gu Mingxi was also very attentive about this exam as well. That made Pang Qian a bit confused.

Although Gu Mingxi always performed well, he didn't always rank 1st in elementary school. Sometimes he would be 2nd or 3rd, but he was never unhappy about it. So when he ended up ranked 2nd after their first midterm in junior high, Pang Qian already thought that was really good. It wasn't something to regret at all.

But this time, Gu Mingxi was very unsatisfied with his performance.

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Before the final exams, he did a lot of practice questions. He memorized his English very frequently too. Pang Qian was dumbfounded. Seeing him studying all day long, reading and practicing, she couldn't stop herself from saying, “Gu Mingxi, don't always sit there. Let's go out and play a bit.”



Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at her, his gaze passing her to outside the window. They were sitting near the window on the third floor, and they could see the school field. There were a few boys from the high school playing basketball on the court, and some junior high students near the table tennis area.

Xie Yi was playing table tennis. He had on an eye-catching red down jacket, holding a paddle, bent over, waiting for the serve. When the ball came from the other side, he quickly started moving, accurately returning the ball.

Gu Mingxi averted his eyes. He pursed his lips and shook his head, "There are exams. After the exams are over, I can play as much as I want."

Pang Qian let out a long sigh. With a slightly taunting tone, "After exams are over, it's winter break. That's the most boring time, and there's nothing to play then."

Gu Mingxi looked at her, without refuting. He just lowered his head and picked his pen back up with his foot, starting a new set of math problems.

Pang Qian was waiting for him to start quarreling with her, just like back in elementary school. But she realized then that Gu Mingxi spoke less and less during school now. Sometimes she would poke him with her pen or tease him. But even when she kicked or hit him, he didn't bicker with her.

Pang Qian felt a bit embarrassed, like it was pointless. She sprawled out across her desk and looked at the other students in the classroom. They all seemed to gather around together. Aside from their deskmates, there would also be the students sitting in front and behind them. Wang Tingting and Zhang Wei were becoming better friends because they sat in front (and behind) each other. Although Xia Lang and Liu Hanlin often quarreled, when Liu Hanlin was sick and couldn't come to school, Xia Lan brought his homework to his house for him. Xie Yi's deskmate was named Sun Mingfang. Their relationship was just normal. On the other hand, he was on very good terms with the girl in front of him, Qiu Lina. After class ended, Qiu Lina would always turn around and laugh as she talked to Xie Yi. There was also Jian Zhe. After junior high started, he and Gu Mingxi didn't often hang out much anymore. He'd made new friends, and only helped out when Gu Mingxi needed to use the restroom.



It seemed like only Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, sitting in the corner of the classroom, were still trapped inside the bars of elementary school. The students in the row in front of them didn't really want to turn around to talk to them. Pang Qian felt that, not only hadn't she made any new friends, she'd also grown a bit estranged from Wang Tingting.

Originally, she still had Gu Mingxi. She could joke around with him. But now, Gu Mingxi was growing more quiet. She didn't know why either. Pang Qian was growing more restless. She only hoped that the exams would finish quickly and winter break would arrive. But thinking of the new semester that would come after the break, things would just be as stagnant as they were now. Pang Qi felt rather disheartened.

She only wanted to find someone who would go with her to the bookstore to rent comics. Go out to eat, go rollerblading with her, play games together, go to the video store, or just sit together and talk like young girls do... Of those things, Gu Mingxi could only do some of them. But even when he went with her places, he wouldn't play or eat. After many times, Pang Qian felt that it was kind of pointless.

It was the middle of the month when final exams finally finished. She had seven classes, Chinese, math, English, history, geology(?), life studies(?), and government. She scored 596 points total, which put her at 23rd place in the class. And Gu Mingxi beat out Xie Yi by 19 points, and firmly put himself in 1st for the whole grade.

Pang Qian saw the ranking list posted on the board and was ecstatic. She ran back to Gu Mingxi's side and tugged at his sleeves. "Wah! Gu Mingxi! You're 1st place! You beat out Xie Yi! That's amazing!"

Gu Mingxi's lips turned up into a slight smile, but the smile didn't reach his eyes. He frowned and said, "But... You didn't make it into the top 20."

Pang Qian hadn't thought anything about that. She was already very satisfied with her score and placing. She had made the greatest improvement in the whole class. She knew that it was all thanks to Gu Mingxi.

Pang Qian replied, "Gu Mingxi, I've already done good enough! Next semester, I'll work harder to make sure I get into the top 20!" She smiled happily, pat her



chest and said magnanimously, “I’ll treat you to something to drink!”

Pang Qian keeps her word, so after class, she went to the school mart to buy Gu Mingxi a can of soda. She bought the soda and went back to the classroom. After she helped him pull off the tab, she put in a straw and placed the can by Gu Mingxi’s feet.

Pang Qian didn’t notice the strange stares she got from her classmates at all. A lot of people were quietly watching each move between her and Gu Mingxi. When school finished that day, the class representative came over to Pang Qian and told her that Teacher Cao was looking for her.

Pang Qian wasn’t very familiar with Teacher Cao. She was a student who didn’t really grab onto the teachers’ attentions. She never asked any questions, never held any class positions – not even class representative or group leader.

In every teacher’s mind, Pang Qian was just Gu Mingxi’s deskmate. They’d all heard from Teacher Cao that Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were deskmates in elementary school for six years. The little girl would help Gu Mingxi with any day to day things. The two students already had an understanding. So it was thanks to Gu Mingxi that Pang Qian was able to join the fast class when she enrolled at Origin of Flight. From her ability alone, she would have been placed into the slow class.

But Pang Qian didn’t know any of this, and just hesitatingly headed into the office. There were seven or eight teachers there, each busy with their own work. Pang Qian walked over to Teacher Cao cautiously. And she asked, “Teacher Cao, you were looking for me?”

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“Mm.” Teacher Cao turned to look at her. The girl looked a bit nervous, her face was flushed. Teacher Cao thought for a moment, then asked directly, “Pang Qian, I was looking for you because there was something I wanted to ask you about. Before, you almost failed your English and math midterms. Afterwards, your homework and unit test scores both went up, but you never came to ask me any questions. On the final exams, I took note of your results. English, 90 points. Math, 88 points. Compared to before, you made great progress. But it’s only been two months.”



The more Pang Qian heard, the more confused she was. She didn't understand what Teacher Cao's point was at all. Then Teacher Cao stopped for a moment and asked clearly, "Pang Qian, tell me the truth. During this time, have you been copying Gu Mingxi's homework? And then for the exams, did you beg him to let you peek at his test?"

Hearing these words, it was like a bomb went off in Pang Qian's head. She lifted her head and looked around at the other teachers in the office. There were other teachers for her classes there. They all had their heads lowered, busying themselves with their work. But Pang Qian kept feeling that they were all secretly listening to her conversation with Teacher Cao.

Her face had gotten extremely red. She didn't know what to say, and tried to organize her thoughts about how to explain it all to the teacher. She should explain that she'd been working on her homework every night with Gu Mingxi, that there were a lot of things she didn't understand, but he would teach her.

But before she had the chance to say all that, Teacher Cao had already started his tirade. "Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi is a disabled child. There are things in life that are inconvenient for him. Helping to take care of him is something you should do. But you can't just threaten him to let you cheat off his test and copy his homework! The school let you into the fast class because your dad pleaded with the school, asking to let you and Gu Mingxi be deskmates. It wasn't because of your own abilities. You know what your own abilities are. The midterm exams showed your true level. You've been deskmates with Gu Mingxi for so long. He doesn't have arms but he studies so hard. Why didn't you pick up this kind of habit from him? How can you go so far as to cheat off of him and make him let you see his paper?!"

Teacher Cao took a sip of water and then continued earnestly, "Also, Pang Qian, you and Gu Mingxi are in junior high. This is the time for you to do well in your studies. Don't think about other nonsense things. Gu Mingxi is very innocent. He's a boy, you know. And his body isn't good. If you treat him nicely, he'll develop thoughts. That's normal. I don't feel good about talking to him about it, I'm worried I'll hurt his pride. But you should understand things. Pang Qian, you can't use him! The only future Gu Mingxi has is to study well. He's working so hard, you can't go and distract him!"



After hearing this, Pang Qian already decided to give up rebutting. She held her hands, tilted her head, pointed her toes, and looked at the ground as if she didn't care anymore. She also stopped listening to Teacher Cao's chattering.

After some more long-winded talking, the teacher wanted her to promise she wouldn't do it again. All the other teachers in the office looked toward her, and that's when Pang Qian finally spoke.

She said, "Teacher Cao, I want to change seats. I don't want to be deskmates with Gu Mingxi anymore."

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 13

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 13 Gossip

*Don't put your smelly feet on my bed!*

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Pang Qian left the office and walked down the corridor back to the classroom. As she walked, she finally couldn't hold it in anymore and started crying.

Groups of twos and threes passed by here after finding out about their final exam scores. Some of them were excited, some were depressed, chattering as they passed. Occasionally, someone would look strangely at Pang Qian.

Pang Qian wiped away her tears with the back of her hand and walked back into the classroom with her head down.

Most of the students had already left, only the students on cleaning duty were still there. Pang Qian walked over to Gu Mingxi's side and started tidying up her belongings. Gu Mingxi stayed in his seat, quietly watching her.

When she stood up and put on her backpack, Gu Mingxi opened his mouth to ask, "Pang Pang."

He stood up to stand in front of Pang Qian, but she turned away to avoid him. Gu Mingxi walked in front of her again, trapping her against the desk.

With nowhere to escape, Pang Qian could only lower her head even more. Gu Mingxi turned slightly to look at her. After a long time, he asked, "What's wrong? Why was Teacher Cao looking for you?"

"Nothing," Pang Qian said quietly. "Let's go home. The cartoons are going to start soon." Gu Mingxi wanted to keep asking, but the students on cleaning duty started taunting them. The way they were positioned was a bit ambiguous. He had trapped her between her desk and the wall, and he was even leaning toward her. They stood very close together, so much that they could feel each others



breaths. The other boys who were holding brooms whistled, and there was even someone who growled, “Gu Mingxi! Give a kiss!”

Gu Mingxi straightened up and took a step back. With flushed cheeks, Pang Qian lifted her head up. Her eyes were all red, and she glared at the group of jeering boys.

They didn’t notice how strange Pang Qian was and just kept laughing. Mo Xiaogang even copied Gu Mingxi and pushed another boy against the blackboard, into the corner. He pulled his arms into his sleeves to leave them swinging around. The boy in the corner pinched his throat and called out strangely, “You’re so bad! Don’t kiss me!”

The others there seemed like they wanted to laugh but couldn’t. Gu Mingxi gritted his teeth and lowered his eyes. He was about to call Pang Qian to leave, but the girl in front of him had already walked off, heading to the lectern at the front of the room.

She picked up the box of chalk there and raised her arm up, looking like she wanted to dump it all onto Mo Xiaogang. Gu Mingxi cried out in surprise, “Pang Qian!”

But no chalk fell. Someone had stopped her from behind. With tears in her eyes, she turned around, and found herself facing Xie Yi, who’d just come back from playing ping pong.

Gu Mingxi had already run up to Pang Qian, looking at her with a frown. Xie Yi pulled the box out of Pang Qian’s hands with a blank face. His gaze swept over Mo Xiaogang, and then he turned and walked around the room. As he walked, he dropped chalk about, and even stepped on a few sticks. The chalk was crushed, leaving trails of chalk dust all over the floor.

Everyone was silent. Xie Yi walked back to the lectern and tossed the empty case at Mo Xiaogang. He said coldly, “You’re bored? Clean up the floor first.”

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Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian rode their bikes home. Pang Qian didn’t say anything. After looking her over, Gu Mingxi said, “Pang Qian, forget about what they said.”



Calling her by her full name showed how important this conversation was, but Pang Qian still didn't respond.

Gu Mingxi kept thinking and then asked, "Do you want to eat roasted sweet potatoes? My treat."

Pang Qian, "..."

"Or, how about *tanghulu* (stick of candied fruit)?"

"..."

"Roasted chestnuts, fried *niangao* (New Year's rice cake), grilled sausage?" Gu Mingxi kept naming foods that Pang Qian loved to eat. "Fried smelly tofu, porkballs, fried chicken?"

"..."

A slight smile escaped onto his face, and as if he wasn't at all angry about the earlier events, he said, "I'll treat you to whatever you want to eat. With the results today, you've improved so much. Consider it as a reward from me..."

If he hadn't mentioned that, it would have been fine. But once he mentioned that, Pang Qian went through a string of mixed up emotions. She cut him off with a shout, "Who wants your reward?! Who wants it, huh?! If you want to eat so much, go eat by yourself! You came in 1st in the grade after all! The one who deserves a reward the most is you, isn't it?! I don't have the right to stand in your spotlight!"

With her shot-like words, he became flustered. He stammered, "Pang Pang..."

He was very innocent, with a pair of pure and clear eyes. Pang Qian knew that she had gone overboard, but it was a fact that she was very frustrated. And with no one to talk to about it, she could only release her anger onto Gu Mingxi.

She figured he wouldn't get angry. Actually, Teacher Cao was right about one thing. She was always bullying him.

Her tears disappointingly fell again. Pang Qian snapped her head back and sniffled. Taking advantage that she hadn't cried in front of Gu Mingxi yet, she peddled faster to get home.

Every time they had a quarrel, this is how she would face off against him. She



knew that he had no way of chasing after her. If he rode too fast, it would be hard for him to brake, and he might fall off. Truth be told, this semester, he'd slipped on his bike and twisted his foot many times, but he never told his parents. He would just call Pang Qian to help him apply medicine and bandage it up.

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Since the exams were over, the students were allowed to stay home for two days. Pang Qian didn't have to go over to Gu Mingxi's to do homework, but she felt stuffy inside. Every day, she would watch TV or read comics. When Gu Mingxi came over to look for her, she would hide in her room, refusing to see him. Gu Mingxi waited in the living room for half an hour, and then just helplessly returned home.

Pang Qian knew that she was being frustrating and worrying him. Gu Mingxi hadn't done anything wrong. In fact, he had helped her a lot. Without his help, her ranking wouldn't have increased that much.

But, it was also because of him! That's why others started rumors about her, that's why she couldn't make new friends, and she was even accused of cheating by the teacher! Teacher Cao even said she had used him! But what she couldn't stand the most was that she only now found out that she'd been accepted into the fast class because she'd been deskmates with Gu Mingxi for six years!

What a joke. She climbed onto her bed and thought, in the eyes of their classmates, she was Gu Mingxi's "girlfriend." And in the eyes of her teachers, she was his caretaker!

On the last day of school, when they went to pick up their final exam score reports, Pang Qian didn't go with Gu Mingxi. She also didn't care about how he got to school. She just didn't want to speak to him for the time being.

Initially, Gu Mingxi didn't know why Pang Qian had been so angry. It wasn't until he went to the washroom with Liu Hanlin, who complained to him, "Gu Mingxi, when you're taking tests in the future, don't let Crab copy. If she scores that well, it's not fair to the other students." That's when he finally realized what Pang Qian encountered.

When school ended, he'd originally wanted to speak to Pang Qian, but he was



called into the office by Teacher Cao. Before he went, he told Pang Qian, who was packing her backpack, “Pang Pang, wait for me. Let’s leave together in a little bit.”

Pang Qian lowered her head, pouted, and ignored him.

As he stood in the office, listening to Teacher Cao’s teachings, Gu Mingxi finally found out the “whole truth.” He couldn’t stay silent any longer, so he said, “Teacher Cao, I swear to you, Pang Qian didn’t cheat off of me on the exams. Not even a little! Her results were the product of her own work!”

Teacher Cao waved his hand in dismissal and said, with some impatience, “Gu Mingxi, you don’t have to speak up for her. I know that you two are good friends that grew up together, but shielding her like this won’t help her at all. You’re harming Pang Qian like this! You said that Pang Qian’s results were her own doing? How can you expect me to believe that? It’s only been two months, but her English and math scores went from 60 to 90 points! If she had gotten a tutor or if she had asked the teachers for help, that’s one thing. But she didn’t, not even once!”

Gu Mingxi shrugged his shoulders with a bit of anxiousness. “No, actually, every day, Pang Qian...”

“That’s enough, don’t say any more.” Teacher Cao stood up, and gently pat Gu Mingxi’s shoulders. For this young class teacher, of course she felt she ought to pay more attention to the disabled child in her class. Towards Gu Mingxi, she seemed very kind, but they weren’t very close. Even with this act of patting (this kind of body) on the shoulder, she was a bit afraid and would hold back her strength.

She continued, “Gu Mingxi, don’t worry too much. I just want to say to you once. Even if you perform well in your studies, you can’t just help others cheat. Even once your deskmate changes, you have to make sure to know your bottom line. Understand?”

Gu Mingxi caught onto the main point of Teacher Cao’s words. His eyes opened wide, and he asked, “Change deskmates?”

Teacher Cao nodded. “Mm, Pang Qian already told me that starting next semester, she wouldn’t be deskmates with you. I’ll arrange for a good student



to...”

Before she finished speaking, Gu Mingxi had already turned and run out. Teacher Cao chased him to the office doors, and only saw that this youth was running very quickly through the hallway. The empty sleeves at his side were dancing violently. And then he was out of sight.

When Gu Mingxi got back to the classroom, Pang Qian had already left. He quickly packed up his things. After he couldn't get his backpack onto his shoulders correctly, he twisted around and bit onto his backpack to hold it in place. He held this position as he ran down the stairs and ran towards the bike racks.

His backpack was very heavy, so his teeth hurt. But he continued holding on. He got to the bike racks and looked around at the few remaining bikes. Pang Qian was long gone.

Gu Mingxi felt his strength dropping. He loosened his bite for a moment and his bag fell to the ground with a “pang.”

He stood alone at the bike storage, panting heavily. After a long while, several people had come and gone, and only his bike remained. Gu Mingxi stared at his own bike and let out a long sigh. Then he pulled up his backpack with his teeth and rode back home.

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That evening, Pang Shuisheng went to school for a parent teacher meeting. Pang Qian hid in her room, reading comics. A knock came from outside.

Pang Qian heard the sound of her mom answering the door, and then she heard Gu Mingxi's voice. After awhile, Jin Ai'hua opened her room door, “Qian Qian, Mingxi's looking for you.”

Pang Qian sat up from her bed, and Gu Mingxi had already entered her room. He had just bathed, his hair still wet. He was wearing a gray, padded sweater that had a soft and thick hood on the back. Even if his sleeves hung there empty, he still looked fresh and cute.

It's just that he looked like he was holding back his expression. Jin Ai'hua closed the door as she left. Gu Mingxi was still standing at the door. After Pang



Qian looked at him, she climbed back into bed and continued reading comics.

Gu Mingxi walked over to her desk and sat down in her chair. Pang Qian ignored him, and he also didn't call her, just sitting quietly in the chair.

Pang Qian was really amazing too. Even with such a large person sitting to her side, she could peacefully continue reading comics. Gu Mingxi sat up straight for 10 minutes, but finally couldn't stand it any longer. He lifted his foot to her bed and poked at her comic, and asked, "What are you reading..."

"Pa!" Pang Qian rudely hit his leg. Gu Mingxi quickly pulled his foot back. Pang Qian glared at him, "Don't put your smelly feet on my bed!"

"..." Gu Mingxi's expression changed slightly. In a quiet voice, he said, "My feet are clean. I just washed them."

"Doesn't matter!" Pang Qian pouted and then sat up, dropping her comic to the side. Then she asked, "Why are you looking for me?"

Gu Mingxi looked at her for a moment and then said, "My mom went to the parent teacher meeting tonight. I told her to explain to Teacher Cao that we've been working on our homework together. When you don't understand, I would explain it to you. I already told Teacher Cao this afternoon, but she didn't believe it, so I told my mom to explain. If she still doesn't believe it, my mom can ask your dad too. Anyway... I'll definitely make sure that Teacher Cao believes that your results were from your own efforts, that you've been working really hard. She can't treat you wrongly like this."

Gu Mingxi's voice was currently in the stage of changing, so it was a bit hoarse, not that nice to listen to. But his tone was very warm and calm. When he spoke, he kept his eyes on Pang Qian, his eyes very clear.

Pang Qian lowered her head and pulled at her bed sheets. She didn't say anything for a long time.

Gu Mingxi waited a bit longer. He pursed his lips and gathered his courage to say, "So... Pang Qian, can you not change seats?"

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 14

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 14 Changes in Him

*Gu Mingxi, why do I always have to accommodate you in everything I do?*

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In the quiet room, Pang Qian returned Gu Mingxi's gaze. She suddenly wondered what had happened during these years that made it so hard for them to separate.

At the start, they went to school together. Pang Shuisheng instructed Pang Qian, "Qian Qian, you're Mingxi's little sister. Mingxi doesn't have any arms. If anyone bullies him, you have to tell the teacher. And when you come home, you have to tell me. Most importantly, if there's something that Mingxi can't do, you have to help him."

Pang Qian carried this mission as she started school with Gu Mingxi. At the time, Gu Mingxi had just lost his arms one year ago. There really was so much that he couldn't do. He had a hard time flipping the pages of books and writing things. The boxes for writing characters was so small, but when he used his feet to write, his characters were very big. He could only use a lot more time than other kids to practice each stroke after stroke.

The first week of school, Li Han had gone along. She would help Gu Mingxi, as she showed Pang Qian how to help him. And then Li Han stopped going to school with them. Pang Qian, who had just turned 6 years old, had become Gu Mingxi's little caretaker.

When they started and finished school, Pang Qian needed to help him put on and take off his backpack. When he used his feet to put his things away, she would give him a hand, because he still wasn't very adept at using his feet. He would often drop his books and wouldn't be able to pick them up. When they drank milk, she had to help him insert the straw and place it by his feet. When it



was time to eat, she had to help him pick up his meal. At that time, Gu Mingxi wasn't very good at eating his food. He would always drop the food onto his clothes or his desk. Pang Qian had to help him clean up. When it was winter time, because they wore more clothes, it wasn't easy for Gu Mingxi to move around. So then, Pang Qian had to help him eat as well.

Actually, there were so many of these kinds of things, you couldn't count them. At school or when they had other activities, little Pang Qian was just like Gu Mingxi's shadow. Except for when he went to the washroom, she would help him with all types of things. Help him put on his hat, help him get things, help him take off his raincoat, help him tie his shoelaces, help him buy his bus ticket, help wipe away his sweat...

This lifestyle had continued for many years, and Pang Qian had already grown accustomed to it. Gu Mingxi as well. Even though later on, Gu Mingxi had learned how to do many things on his own and didn't need Pang Qian's help as much, the two of them had grown used to having the other by their side.

But this kind of balance would one day be broken. They would grow up, and find their individual personalities. They'd want to have their own lives. Just like all the young boys and girls in the world, they would hate their parents sneaking looks at their diaries. They wouldn't tell their parents all about their concerns anymore. There would be some student in their class of the opposite sex who gave them good feelings and would leave them smiling all day long. They would want to make new friends and have their own social activities, just like a grown up. They'd be interested in new and fresh things. With curiosity, they'd explore the world. They'd start chasing stars. They'd read books they didn't use to understand. They'd start reflecting about things, and they'd become more mature.

They wouldn't want to be constrained to the life they've lived so far, spending dull days one after another.

In this moment, Pang Qian suddenly thought of Xie Yi. The cool Xie Yi. The cute Xie Yi. The eccentric, unreasonable, but charming Xie Yi. Without a doubt, for Pang Qian who wasn't yet 13 years old, the obedient, gentle, reserved Gu Mingxi wasn't nearly as attractive as Xie Yi.



There were no young kids who didn't envy Xie Yi.

They envied his carefree personality, unrestrained lifestyle, being able to do as he pleased. After a decade of being oppressed by her parents and teachers, Xie Yi appeared in Pang Qian's life like a star on the horizon, shining brightly but always out of reach.

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Gu Mingxi couldn't wait for Pang Qian's answer, so he said, "Pang Pang, really. Don't change seats. I know that you're unhappy sitting in the back all the time, but..."

"Gu Mingxi," Pang Qian gently called out his name. Gu Mingxi stopped talking. Pang Qian pulled her legs up and wrapped her arms around them, buried her chin in her knees and then looked at him.

She said, "I've already been your deskmate for six years, Gu Mingxi. It's been long enough. You're right, I don't want to sit in the back anymore. Not even just the last row, it's in the corner. When class is over, no one talks to me. I don't really know why, but Wang Tingting and I used to be really good friends, but now, she always goes to play with Zhang Wei and Qiu Lina on the weekends. She never calls me along. They all say that I'm dating you because we're always together. They even say that I'm really lucky. I get to copy your homework and cheat off of your test, so then I get a high ranking."

As she spoke, Pang Qian cried. She continued, with tears dropping, "Teacher Cao even said that I was only let into the fast class because I was your deskmate. I was originally supposed to be in the slow class. Gu Mingxi, I can never join in when the girls in class talk to each other. And the boys are always teasing you and me. I really hate this, really. I hate it so much. Gu Mingxi, why do I always have to accommodate you in everything I do? It's been six and a half years. That's long enough. You're really good at using your feet to do things now. Why do I still have to be your deskmate?"

As Pang Qian continued on, Gu Mingxi's originally clear and bright eyes dimmed and lost their glimmer. He looked at her carefully, lips pursed tightly.

The two of them sat there quietly, and only the sound of Pang Qian's light sobs remained. Awhile later, Gu Mingxi said, "Then... Pang Pang, if you change seats,



then we also won't go to school and come back together?"

"Can you ride your bike on your own?" Pang Qian asked with red eyes. Sobbing, she said, "If you can ride by yourself, it's best if we don't go to school together anymore. I hate them talking about us."

Gu Mingxi clenched his teeth until his gums hurt. He asked again, "Then next semester, will you keep coming over to my house to do homework?"

Pang Qian sniffled and then slowly shook her head.

Gu Mingxi frowned, "Then what if your scores drop again? I promised you before that I'd make sure you never scored as poorly as you did on the midterms again."

Pang Qian looked away and murmured, "I'll study well on my own. Gu Mingxi, you're not a teacher. Whether I score well or not, it doesn't have anything to do with you."

Hearing this, Gu Mingxi let out an "Oh," and then stood up.

Pang Qian still had her head lowered to her knees. After standing for awhile, Gu Mingxi finally said, "Okay, I got it. I'm going home."

He got to the door and lifted his foot to open the door. When his foot touched the handle though, he let go. He turned back to look at her.

Pang Qian's position hadn't changed at all. Gu Mingxi kept staring at her, the two of them were as still as statues. A long while after, Gu Mingxi finally turned, lifted his foot to open the door, and then slowly walked out.

Pang Qian heard him saying his goodbyes to Jin Ai'hua. He changed his shoes at the door, and you could hear the scratching of the stool against the ground. Then the door opened and closed. The house quickly fell silent.

Pang Qian turned and lied on her bed. A little later, she started crying bitterly.

That winter break, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi didn't spend their time together. Their families had a meal together so they met then. They only spoke a few passing words about cartoons and their break homework. Pang Qian felt that Gu Mingxi's attitude was very polite, so she couldn't act so brazenly with him like in the past.



When the new semester started, Teacher Cao really did change seats. She changed everyone's seats. Everyone was surprised to see that Pang Qian was included as well. but Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both kept very quiet.

Pang Qian was finally moved over to the big group against the wall, in the second row. She had been pulled away from Gu Mingxi in a long diagonal. When Pang Qian packed up her things, Gu Mingxi lowered his head without speaking.

Finally, when Pang Qian picked up her back to go, she quietly asked Gu Mingxi, "Do you know who your new deskmate it?"

Gu Mingxi didn't look up, just answering, "I already told Teacher Cao that I didn't want a new deskmate. I wanted to sit by myself."

Pang Qian, "..."

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Pang Qian had a new deskmate, a boy named Hu Tianli. He was plump and smiled, like a Buddha. He was very easy to get along with. Sun Mingfang and Jiang Lei sat in front of her. And behind her was Qiu Lina and Xie Yi.

When she was in school, Pang Qian had never sat at the front of the classroom before. At first, she wasn't very used to it. But after awhile, she realized that sitting among other students felt really nice.

And she was even sitting in front of Xie Yi. When class ended, she could say a few words to him. When they passed back homework or exam papers, she would be able to see him. Each time, it would make her heart tremble.

On the other hand, Gu Mingxi sat by himself at the back of the classroom.

After last semester's final exams, the two classes had changed a little and Class 6 now had 47 students. 46 of them sat together in pairs. Only Gu Mingxi didn't have a deskmate.

He became even more of a loner. He would go to and come from school by himself. Only occasionally, he would talk with Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin. It was mostly to ask them to help him go to the washroom or help him get his lunch box.

He wasn't like that before.



When he was in elementary school, he wasn't at all quiet. He would also participate in all the school activities. When Pan Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua chatted, they would bring up Gu Mingxi. They said that he wasn't a simple kid. Without his arms, he felt inferior and sensitive. When he was with Pang Qian before, he would still smile and laugh about things every day.

But now?

Since Pang Qian sat at the front of the room, most of the time, she couldn't see Gu Mingxi. Even after class, she also couldn't openly look at him. She could only sneak a glance at him when she entered the classroom.

She always entered from the back door of the classroom, because that way, she'd be able to see him. A lot of times, Gu Mingxi was just sitting there, slightly hunched over, legs bent and resting on his desk. He held a pen between his toes, working on practice questions nonstop.

There was once though, that Pang Qian entered the room and saw him leaning against his chair, feet on the ground. His empty sleeves hung still at his sides as he stared out the window.

The students in the room were all rowdy, but he seemed unaware of it all, just quietly looking out the window.

It was the start of spring and the weather was nice. The trees on the school field had gone through the winter and were starting to grow leaves again, sprouts of green. The sky was clear and blue, with only a few sparse clouds. Pang Qian suddenly recalled when she sat at the window. When the breeze blew, it felt very refreshing.

Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi didn't often look out the window because if he did, it would make her think that he was looking at her. And then she would poke him with her pen asking, "What are you looking at?! Turn away!"

Now, the seat beside him was empty, so no one could block his line of view anymore. He could look out the window like this. The back of his head faced her so she couldn't guess what his expression was.

Then suddenly Gu Mingxi turned around. Pang Qian was too slow to look away, so she met his eyes with some panic.



Gu Mingxi’s face didn’t show any awkwardness. His eyes were clear like water. After he saw Pang Qian, he took off his shoes, pulled his legs onto his desk, and lowered his head.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 15

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 15 Warm Smile

*Crab, did you know, Gu Mingxi was just watching us play.*

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Pang Qian's scores dropped on the midterms for the second semester. She only scored well enough to be 37th in the class. When she returned home, she was naturally scolded by Pang Shuisheng. Fortunately, he didn't beat her.

Pang Shuisheng smacked the table and asked Pang Qian, "Tell me! Why don't you go to school with Gu Mingxi anymore? Why did you want to change your seat? After you spent two months doing homework with Gu Mingxi, your test scores weren't bad! Why have they dropped again?! He never blamed you for being troublesome! You're just too lazy! After being deskmates with him for so many years, why didn't you ever learn to be hardworking like him? If you continue like this, you won't even get into General High! At best, you'll have to go to a vocational school, do you know?!"

Pang Qian stubbornly tilted her head and didn't make a sound. Jin Ai'hua couldn't listen on any further, and pulled Pang Qian to her. "Why are you yelling at her? Qian Qian's growing up. She's already this big. Why should she be stuck with Gu Mingxi all day long? Maybe her scores are bad because she's always had to sit in the corner with him. The teacher would always be worried about Gu Mingxi, so when would they have time to care about Qian Qian."

Pang Qian lowered her head and Jin Ai'hua knocked her on the head. She said, "But you're disappointing too. You're not stupid, so why are your scores so poor? If you're still doing this poorly at the end of the semester, I'll find you a tutor. We're definitely not going to a vocational school. You have to get into at least General high, and then go to a good university."

After being lectured, Pang Qian returned to her room. She bit on her pen and



zoned out. She also didn't understand how her scores had dropped so drastically. The first half of this semester, she had worked pretty hard. She completed the recitations and dictations that the teacher assigned for English. She never skipped her math homework. But there was one thing. After that talk with Teacher Cao, she wouldn't ever go to the teacher's office to ask for help, not even if you beat her to death. For the questions she didn't understand, she could only just memorize them.

She couldn't help but to think about Gu Mingxi. In the past, Gu Mingxi would explain it to her, calmly, detailed, until she understood it. He never complained that it was troublesome. Even when Pang Qian pestered him or made jokes, he would never get angry with her.

Now that Pang Qian wasn't deskmates with Gu Mingxi, whenever she had trouble with math, she would ask Xie Yi. He would also explain it. But after he explained once and Pang Qian still didn't understand, Qiu Lina, who sat next to him, put on a ridiculing expression. Pang Qian felt embarrassed, so she just thanked Xie Yi and turned back around. After that, she was always too embarrassed to ask Xie Yi again.

Gu Mingxi scored 1st in the whole grade on this exam again. Xie Yi only came in 4th, but he didn't mind at all. He still ate when it was time to eat, played when it was time to play. He even called Pang Qian to play ping pong together once.

He asked, "Crab, can you play ping pong?"

Pang Qian could only play a little, so she shook her head, "Not really."

"Let's go. When we play, I'll teach you." Xie Yi called together a few other students, "Qiu Lina, Hu Tianli, Jiang Lei, let's go!"

He was a ping pong expert. He had a coach when he was younger. He beat the whole grade and was known as invincible.

The kids switched off. When you lost five times, you would switch out. Pang Qian couldn't play, so she would always lose five times in a row. Watching at the side, Xie Yi couldn't stand it any longer. "Crab, let me show you how to serve. Your serving is really too poor."

He walked over to Pang Qian to demonstrate. He bent over, tossed the ball



with his left hand, and whacked with the paddle in his right hand. The ball flew over the net to the other side. Hu Tianli received it, but then it went out of bounds.

Pang Qian thought to herself, “So cool.” And then she looked shyly towards Xie Yi.

“You see? This is a very easy method of serving, but the ball curves, so your opponent won’t be able to return it.” He demonstrated a few more times, and then told Pang Qian to try it. Pang Qian boldly followed as Xie Yi demonstrated. She hit it with her right hand, and she served the ball. But it just flew away.

The girls at the side laughed. Pang Qian knew that she’d embarrassed herself. Xie Yi didn’t say anything, but just went to fetch the ball. He raised his eyebrows toward Qiu Lina, “What are you laughing at? Pang Qian hit the ball on her first time. That’s talent right there, okay?”

He handed the ball over to Pang Qian. He very naturally grabbed onto Pang Qian’s right hand that was holding the paddle. “Toss the ball and then watch carefully what I do.”

Pang Qian’s heart was thumping. She threw the ball up with her left hand, and Xie Yi pulled her right hand to swing the paddle. With a crisp sound, the ball bounced on the other side, and Hu Tianli couldn’t return it, once again. With a huff, he went to pick up the ball.

Xie Yi released her hand and smiled, “Got it? That kind of strength, just like that.”

Pang Qian, “Mm.” She lowered her head and looked at her wrist. There was still a trace of the warmth left by Xie Yi’s hand. It made her face burn up.

After playing, the few kids walked back to the classroom covered in sweat. Xie Yi walked quietly next to Pang Qian. He started talking to her in a soft voice, “Crab, what’s with you and Gu Mingxie? Why don’t you talk to him at all this semester?”

Pang Qian felt a pang of surprise. What Xie Yi said was right. She really hadn’t spoken to Gu Mingxi in a long time.

They’d always been together since they were young. But these few months,



even though they were neighbors and classmates, Pang Qian felt that the distance between them had grown a lot.

She didn't even meet Gu Mingxi when they left for school. She adjusted the time that she left for school, from 7 to 7:30, but regardless, she'd never run into Gu Mingxi. And then ten minutes after she arrived at school, Gu Mingxi would walk into the classroom.

Later on, Pang Qian realized that Gu Mingxi purposely waited for her to leave before leaving himself.

Pang Qian didn't know how she should react to Xie Yi's words. After a long time, she finally gave a reason, "Because all the stupid boys in class kept talking about me and Gu Mingxi. It was really annoying."

Xie Yi was caught by surprise and asked, "Just because of that?"

Pang Qian silently nodded.

Xie Yi thought that was incredulous. "I heard Jian Zhe say that you'd been good friends with Gu Mingxi since you were younger. But just because of that, you're ignoring him?"

Pang Qian, "..."

"That's not really good. Can you bear it?" Xie Yi was hitting the ball with his paddle as he walked. He was really amazing. The small, white ball started bouncing on the paddle. He raised his head and casually looked at something. A bit lazily, he turned to Pang Qian and said, "Crab, did you know, Gu Mingxi was just watching us play."

Pang Qian felt like she'd been hit by something heavy. Her eyes suddenly raised to look at the third floor windows. The boy at the window couldn't turn away quickly enough, so he just didn't try to hide, his eyes calmly watching Pang Qian.

Deep inside, she couldn't bear it. In fact, she regretted it.

Pang Qian didn't know how she and Gu Mingxi ended up like this. But she really hadn't found the opportunity, nor did she know how, to mend their friendship. At school, she felt embarrassed searching out Gu Mingxi to talk. On the way to school and back home, he would avoid her. Most importantly, the



current Pang Qian appeared very happy. Leaving out her grades and ranking, she'd made several new friends. On the weekends, her classmates would invite her out with them.

That kind of happiness wasn't something that Gu Mingxi could give her. Sometimes Pang Qian thought that maybe her relationship with Gu Mingxi could only be maintained if they were deskmates. So when they sat at opposite corners of the room, they would also slowly fall out of each others' worlds.

The only time that Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had spoken was on a Sunday afternoon in the first week of May.

That day, Pang Qian was biting her lollipop as she opened the door. And right across from her, the door to Apt. 502 also opened. The boy behind the door was distracted for a moment. Originally, he was going to walk out, but he just stood there.

Pang Qian looked at him, then opened her mouth to greet him, "Hi, Gu Mingxi."

"Ah," he responded, still not going out.

He was carrying a drawing pad and a canvas bag on his back. Pang Qian walked down together with him and asked, "Where are you going?"

"To learn to draw," he said simply. When they walked down to the second floor, he couldn't stop himself from turning back to ask her, "What about you?"

Pang Qian blinked and then said, "I'm going to Xinhua Bookstore with Wang Tingting."

"Oh, to buy the exam book that the math teacher talked about?"

"Mm."

"Can you get me a copy?" Gu Mingxi asked. "I don't have the time to go."

"Okay."

"The money... Should I give it to you now?" He stopped on the stairs and said, "It's in my bag. You can take it out."

"You can just give it to me next time."



“Okay.”

The two of them walked towards the bike shed together. Gu Mingxi pursed his lips and then said, “They’re rearranging classes again after the final exam. Last time, they changed four people. I don’t know how many they’ll change this time.”

Pang Qian, “...”

“Pang... Qian.” He looked at her, and said seriously, “You should work harder a bit, don’t just play. You should try to stay in the top 25 students. We’ll be learning physics and chemistry later, which will be harder. Looking at your results now, you can’t really say where you’ll end up when it’s time for the high school entrance exams.”

Pang Qian was suddenly a bit angry, her eyebrows jumping up. She said loudly, “How do you know I’m not working hard?! How can you say I’m only playing?! I also want to be in the top 25, but it doesn’t just happen just because I want it! Gu Mingxi, you’re so annoying! I know that you’re ranked 1st! But please, just leave me alone!”

Then Pang Qian tossed her small bag into her bicycle basket and rode off. She felt that Gu Mingxi was getting less and less cute, always trying to lecture people. What’s so great about being 1st? Xie Yi also did really well, okay? But he never talked about things like exams, graduating, and ranks with others. How did Gu Mingxi become so annoying?! It was just the first year (of three) of middle school. Why did she always have to worry about the things that would happen in the next two years! It was really so boring!

After that, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi’s relationship hit the freezing point. She helped him buy the exam book, but she didn’t personally give it to him. She asked Li Han to give it to him.

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In the middle of May, the metals company started building the new factory west of the city. Gu Guoxiang went on a business trip to Beijing to inspect their associate company. He’d be gone for a week.

Only Li Han and Gu Mingxi were left at home. The days passed calmly, but things abruptly changed.



That evening, after dinner, Pang Qian was doing homework in her room. Jin Ai'hua was washing the dishes, and Pang Shuisheng was watching the news. At that moment, there suddenly came a loud shout at the door, following by a booming knocking sound. In a frightened voice, Gu Mingxi called out, "Uncle, Auntie! Uncle, Auntie, open the door! Help! Uncle, open the door! Help! Please, help my mom—"

Jin Ai'hua quickly opened the door. Pang Shuisheng and Pang Qian ran out from their rooms. When the door opened, Gu Mingxi's appearance gave everyone a fright. His feet were bare, his face pale, looking very panicked. His white shirt and gray pants were covered in blood.

Pang Shuisheng immediately ran over to Gu Mingxi's house. He found an unconscious Li Han in the bathroom. She was bleeding a lot, her pants completely soaked with blood. Pang Shuisheng calmed himself down and told Jin Ai'hua to call 120 (ambulance). Then he had Pang Qian get a large towel to wrap around Li Han to keep her warm.

Gu Mingxi stood outside the bathroom the whole time, watching everything anxiously. Pang Qian walked over to him and reached out to tug on his shirt sleeve. He trembled and then turned to her, looking completely lost.

The ambulance arrived very timely. Pang Shuisheng rode with Li Han to the ambulance. After tidying up a little, Jin Ai'hua took the two kids over in a taxi.

After Li Han entered the operating room, Pang Shuisheng floundered to call Gu Guoxiang in Beijing. Gu Guoxiang was very anxious and bought a plane ticket for 10 o'clock that evening, saying he could be back soon.

When Gu Guoxiang arrived at the hospital, it was 3 in the morning. Jin Ai'hua was watching over Li Han after her surgery. Pang Shuisheng was taking care of Gu Mingxi, and so Pang Qian also spent the night at the hospital.

Seeing the fatigued Gu Guoxiang hurrying over, Pang Shuisheng immediately went to meet him. Gu Guoxiang asked, "What happened? What's wrong with Ah Han?"

Pang Shuisheng pat his shoulder and said, "Guoxiang, calm down. Ah Han's life isn't in danger. She just...had a miscarriage."



Gu Guoxiang was extremely shocked, “Ah Han was pregnant?!”

“You didn’t know?” Pang Shuisheng said a bit awkwardly, “Maybe she didn’t know either, or maybe she hadn’t gotten to telling you yet.”

Pang Shuisheng walked with Gu Guoxiang over to Gu Mingxi. He was sitting upright in his chair. The blood on his clothes was already completely dry, now a frightening dark red color. He looked up to see his father and immediately stood up.

“Dad.”

His voice was dry and very hoarse. Pang Qian was sleepy and had fallen asleep in her chair, but she opened her eyes after hearing him. He saw Gu Guoxiang standing in front of Gu Mingxi coldly asking, “Mingxi, what happened?”

“I don’t know either.” Gu Mingxi lightly shook his head. Then he started retelling the events of the night, “After school, I had dinner with Mom. Then we went to the market to buy some things. I don’t have any more paint, and we need it for class tomorrow. So Mom said we’d go out. After we got home, Mom said her stomach wasn’t feeling well, so she went to the bathroom. She went in and then fell. I ran over to see... She was bleeding a lot, said her stomach hurt... I... I couldn’t help her up, so I went to find Uncle Pang.”

Gu Guoxiang pondered for a moment and then asked, “You went out with your mom to buy paint. Did you buy anything else?”

“Notebooks, ballpoint pens, toilet paper, shampoo, and...” Gu Mingxi tried hard to recall. “And rice. Mom bought a bag of rice. She said we were almost out.”

Pang Shuisheng’s face became imposing. Gu Guoxiang’s voice already started trembling and he asked, “Rice, how much did it weigh?”

“Probably... 10 *jin* (2 jin per kg).” Gu Mingxi watched his father’s gaze, “Dad...”

“That’s enough, don’t say anymore.” Gu Guoxiang waved his hand feebly. “Your mother carried a 10 *jin* bag of rice, and other things, from the market all the way home?”

Gu Mingxi nodded.



Gu Guoxiang smiled miserably, his body started shaking. Pang Shuisheng hurried over to help him. He rubbed his eyebrows, and said, “Shuisheng, just look! I’ve really got such a great son.”

Pang Qian didn’t really understand what the questions Gu Guoxiang asked had to do with Li Han getting sick. But she knew that the last words Gu Guoxiang said were criticizing Gu Mingxi.

Of course, Gu Mingxi also knew that. But he was also as confused as Pang Qian. He just stood there, head lowered, not sure what to do. He didn’t look like he was in a good state at all. His clothes were a mess, spotted with blood. The empty sleeves of his t-shirt hung there as his body trembled.

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Two days later, Gu Mingxi got up from bed. He was biting on a “help yourself” (back scratcher), using the small claws on the stick to pull on the elastic waistband as he put on his own pants. Then he picked up a t-shirt with his teeth, sat down on his bed, pulled open the hem area with his feet, and twisted his body into the shirt.

It was summer, and he was already very adept at putting on these kinds of clothes. As long as he has that “help yourself,” he doesn’t need anyone to help him.

Gu Guoxiang had left for work. After Gu Mingxi changed his clothes, he went to the bathroom to wash his face and brush his teeth. He did all of this with his feet. Though it was a bit slow, he could do it all on his own. After washing, he went to the refrigerator and pulled out a bag of bread with his teeth. He dropped it onto the table and then lowered his head to eat. Lastly, he went to his parents’ room and turned to Li Han on the bed, “Mom, I’m going to school. Are you alright?”

Li Han opened her eyes and smiled at Gu Mingxi. She reached out to pat his hair, and then she said weakly, “I’m fine. Grandma will come over in a bit. Just take care of yourself.”

“Mm,” Gu Mingxi nodded. “Then I’m going.”

“Go. Be careful on the way, and don’t ride your bike.”



He thought for a moment and then nodded. "I know. Bye Mom."

Gu Mingxi carried his backpack and walked downstairs. He walked outside and looked toward the bike shed, towards his own bicycle. After thinking for a moment, he walked in the direction of the front gate.

Walking all the way to school took 45 minutes. Gu Mingxi took large strides on the street. He was completely focused on walking, and didn't take note of any of the curious stares that he attracted.

It was the start of summer and the temperature was a little hot. He was also walking quickly, so a thin layer of sweat appeared on his forehead. It wasn't the first time Gu Mingxi was walking this path, but this time, the more he walked, the stranger he felt. He started to feel a bit spooked. Then he stopped in his tracks and suddenly turned around.

In the midst of people walking to and fro, there was a girl wearing a fuchsia dress with her hair tied in a ponytail, standing 5 or 6 meters behind him. Seeing him turn around, she stopped walking. Carrying a backpack on her back, she looked at him.

Gu Mingxi looked at her calmly. Pang Qian looked at him with her head slightly tilted, even sticking out her tongue and making a face.

The morning rays were shining on Gu Mingxi's body. Facing the sun, he squinted, and then suddenly smiled.

That smile she hadn't seen in so long was still so familiar, warmly hitting Pang Qian's heart. She looked at him foolishly, and then she also smiled.

Those two kids stood facing each other on the street, both smiling at the other. Pang Qian walked over to Gu Mingxi, lifted her head to look at him, wrinkled her nose and then said, "Don't smile. Your canines are exposed and you look like a little kid."

Gu Mingxi immediately closed his mouth. He kicked at a pebble on the street and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Doing?" Pang Qian played dumb. "I'm going to school."

"Why aren't you riding your bike?"



“I’m happy.” Pang Qian lifted her chin asking, “Why didn’t you ride your bike?”

“...” He put away his smile and remained silent for a moment. Then he said, “A few days ago, I rode my bike home and someone hit me.”

“Ah? Did you get hurt? Why didn’t I know?!” Pang Qian reached out to pull at his clothes. “Are you okay?”

Gu Mingxi twisted and pulled himself away. In a low voice, he said, “When I fell, I scraped my leg. There’s some bruising, but everything else is fine.”

“Why were you so careless?! What a dummy!” Pang Qian complained, immediately crouching and grabbing at Gu Mingxi’s trousers.

“I said that someone else hit me, I didn’t hit them!” Gu Mingxi couldn’t pull away, and she’d already gotten hold of his pants. She saw the scar on his calf, and it was pretty big.

“Did you go to the doctor’s? Did that person compensate you?” Pang Qian asked anxiously. She reached out and touched the bruise with her finger. Gu Mingxi pulled his leg away in pain, “It hurts! Don’t press on it!”

He kicked Pang Qian slightly with the tip of his toes. “Get up, stop looking.”

Pang Qian pouted, but got up. Then she asked, “Did you catch the person who hit you?”

“How can I?” Gu Mingxi shrugged his shoulders, his shirt sleeves swaying. “After that person hit me, they just ran away. They even broke my bike.”

Pang Qian pouted even more. “Why didn’t you say anything.”

“To who?” Gu Mingxi smiled. “It’s not a big deal. It’ll be fine in a few days.”

“So you’ve been walking to school these few days?”

“Mm.”

“It’s a long walk!”

“It’s okay. I can work on memorizing for English class as I walk.”

“You’re really hopeless!”

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walked together. After awhile, Pang Qian said, “Gu



Mingxi, let’s just go to school and back home together in the future.

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# Chapter 16

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 16 Father & Daughter's Promise

*Did you get taller?*

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After school, Pang Qian was walking down the stairs with Sun Mingfang. Sun Mingfan was short and rather introverted. After sitting behind the easygoing Pang Qian for a few months, their relationship had become pretty good.

Usually they would ride their bikes home together, but today, Pang Qian said she didn't bring her bike, so she'd take the bus home.

Sun Mingfang walked toward the bike storage, and Pang Qian hummed as she walked out of the school building. She walked west down the street, looking around on her way. After walking for a few minutes, she heard a boy's voice to her side, "Pang Pang."

Pang Qian turned around and saw Gu Mingxi standing by a bicycle repair station. Dumbfounded, she asked, "Why are you standing there?"

"This place isn't easily noticed by people." Gu Mingxi looked up to the dark canopy above him. Then he walked over to Pang Qian and smiled, "Let's go home."

Pang Qian was still smiling nonstop. "Like this, it's like we're part of the special tasks force."

"Didn't you say you didn't like others talking about us?" Gu Mingxi said lightly, "Then we just won't let them see us."

Pang Qian opened her mouth, wanting to tell him that actually she didn't care anymore. Xie Yi was right. How could the relationship between her and Gu Mingxi be affected by those stupid boys in their class? But seeing Gu Mingxi's clear as water eyes, Pang Qian felt that if she said that now, it would seem a bit



fake. So she just closed her lips.

While they were waiting for the bus, Pang Qian ran over to the small shop to buy a popsicle. She was eating it as she walked back. Gu Mingxi, who was waiting for her at the bus stop, saw her licking on the popsicle like a glutton and called out, laughing, “Pang Pang, if you don’t eat something on the way home every day, will you be unable to go home?”

“Shut up! I don’t!” Pang Qian gave him a light smack on the shoulder. “It’s so hot today so I was just thirsty.”

In the past, she would often show such intimate actions towards him – pinching him, hitting him, tickling him. When they were even younger, they would even sleep in the same bed, rolling around and playing. Gu Mingxi never tried to hide or hide his disabled body. But for some reason, when Pang Qian hit him this time, he took a step back and distanced himself from her.

Pang Qian was a bit taken aback, her hand still hanging in the air. She sulkily pulled her hand back. And as if it wasn’t a big deal, she continued licking her popsicle. Gu Mingxi didn’t say anything. After a few minutes, her popsicle was finished, and the bus arrived.

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The bus was packed during the evening rush hour. By the time Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi boarded the bus, all the seats had long been taken. Pang Qian payed two coins and she and Gu Mingxi walked onto the bus.

In this kind of weather, Gu Mingxi was wearing a short sleeved shirt, and his disabled body was very eye-catching. The bus driver put on the reminder, the female voice repeating, “Please give up your seat for passengers who need it. Thank you.”

Before the announcement went on, it was still fine. Afterwards though, a lot of people took note of Gu Mingxi. But still, no one gave up their seat.

Gu Mingxi’s face didn’t show any particular expression. He just found a vertical pole and leaned against it.

The bus started. Gu Mingxi was standing sideways, his shoulder against the pole, and his legs spread to maintain his balance. Pang Qian stood at his side



protecting him. She held onto a pole with one of her hands, and wrapped her other arm around his waist.

Gu Mingxi resisted a bit, trying to twist away from her hand. Pang Qian glared at him and said quietly, “Don’t move. Do you want another bruise to show up on your leg?”

So Gu Mingxi stopped moving. He turned his head away, toward the window. The street was busy, the shops were lively. People’s tired but somehow fresh faces... He did all he could to divert his attention, but he couldn’t help how sensitive his skin was. The thin cloth wasn’t enough to stop him from feeling the warmth of Pang Qian’s palm. He even felt her fingers rubbing slightly from the shaking of the bus.

He became a bit distracted, and then he felt ashamed for his thoughts.

Pang Qian quietly looked at Gu Mingxi’s side profile. His haircut was pretty good looking. It wasn’t as long as Xie Yi’s and didn’t look as supple either. Rather, it was short and looked rather furry. Under the sunlight, it gave off a healthy shine. As for his face... Pang Qian realized that she hadn’t taken a good look at Gu Mingxi in a long time. Was it really true that distance makes things appear more beautifully? Now, she saw his smooth facial lines, his straight nose, and his sharp eyebrows. Pang Qian had to admit that Gu Mingxi was actually pretty handsome.

And then she had another amazing discovery.

“Gu Mingxi.”

When Pang Qian called him, he turned to look at her. His expression looked a bit unnatural, and he asked, “What?”

“Did you get taller?” Pang Qian stood on her tiptoes to compare. And then cried out, pleasantly surprised, “Hey, you really have gotten taller! Last semester, I was still up to your ear. Now, I’m only at your chin. You’ll be taller than my Dad soon!”

Gu Mingxi’s face reddened a little. In a quiet voice, he said, “I think I got a little taller. My mom said that it was easiest to grow taller in the spring.”

Pang Qian laughed, “Will you grow as tall as your dad in the future? Then you’ll



be too handsome!”

Just then, the bus driver slammed on the brakes. Unable to grab onto anything, Gu Mingxi swayed heavily. Pang Qian anxiously grabbed hold of his waist to help him steady himself.

Finally, a passenger realized that for this boy without arms to stand on the bus was a rather dangerous thing, and got up to let Gu Mingxi sit. Gu Mingxi’s face reddened. Pang Qian thought that he was embarrassed because no one had given up their seat before, so she pushed into the seat. Then she put both of their backpacks onto his lap.

Pang Qian felt that Gu Mingxi was acting a bit strangely. He didn’t say anything and just looked out the window. It was finally their stop and they both got off. They still had to walk for another 10 minutes before they’d be back at the Golden Compound. Gu Mingxi finally opened his mouth to say, “Pang Pang, when I get home, I’ll tell my mom that my leg doesn’t really hurt anymore. In the future, let’s just ride our bike to school.”

Pang Qian asked, “Why?”

“It’s too annoying to take the bus,” Gu Mingxi answered seriously. “And when it comes to walking, you walk too slow.”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi laughed, “Don’t worry. I already got my bike fixed. I can ride it.”

Pang Qian asked with concern, “What if you slip and twist your ankle again? When I used to ride with you, you slipped a few times already.”

Gu Mingxi replied gently, “Normal slipping like that isn’t a big deal. Just don’t tell my mom.”

After he mentioned Li Han, Pang Qian had to ask, “Oh yeah, is your mom any better?”

“A lot better.” Gu Mingxi’s eyes darkened a little, as he continued, “The doctor put on her bed rest for a few days, and he said it wasn’t major. My grandma is taking care of her for now.”

“That’s good.” When Pang Qian thought about that evening’s events, she still



felt a bit of lingering fear. She'd never seen anything like it before. Gu Mingxi and Li Han were both covered in blood. Their bathroom was also heavily stained with it. There were traces of Gu Mingxi's footprints in their living room, all the way out their door to Pang Qian's front door.

He had slammed his body into the door and he'd kicked it with his feet. Jin Ai'hua had washed scrubbed at the floor for a long time with detergent before she was able to clean off the blood.

There was something that Pang Qian still didn't quite understand. She didn't like to keep things from Gu Mingxi, so she asked him, "Gu Mingxi, why did your dad say that about you the other day? What did he mean?"

Gu Mingxi was silent and then said, "My mom lost the baby."

"I know." Pang Qian still didn't understand. "My mom said that it was an accident, not your fault. So why did you dad say that about you?"

"You know, my dad has always wanted to have another kid," Gu Mingxi said evenly. "Now the baby is gone, so he must be very disappointed. Also, I'm not completely without fault. If I didn't bring up going to the market, my mom wouldn't have bought the rice. If she didn't buy the rice, nothing would have happened to her. And... If I had arms, I would have been able to help her carry things. Then nothing would have gone wrong."

Pang Qian didn't understand. "What does this have to do with buying rice? Wh-what does it have to do with whether you have arms or not?"

Gu Mingxi glanced at her, and with a click of his tongue, "You're still a kid. You wouldn't understand."

Pang Qian cried unhappily, "I'm not a kid!"

Seeing her bare her fangs, Gu Mingxi couldn't stop himself from laughing. He patiently explained, "My grandma said that when a woman gets pregnant, they can't carry heavy things for the first three months. They have to be especially careful when they do things, otherwise the chances of a miscarriage increase. It was like that in a TV show too. Moreover, my mom's already 40 years old. Getting pregnant is already a very risky thing for her, so she can't be neglectful. How could she carry something as heavy as that, and all the way back home



too.”

Pang Qian listened and then pouted, saying, “But that’s not your fault. How can your dad say something like that to you?”

Gu Mingxi could only smile. “My dad was just worried about my mom, so he got angry about it.”

Pang Qian suddenly thought of something. She was a bit worried about Gu Mingxi, and said, “If your parents really do have a baby in the future, then it will be a lot younger than you. When you’re 20, your little brother or sister will just be starting school. So then what?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then said with a smile, “What about it? That seems pretty good.”

“How is that good?”

“I’ll already be working by then, and I’ll be making money. I can bring them to eat, buy them toys and clothes.” Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian, “My dad will definitely like him or her. And they’ll be a very cute kid. Is that a bad thing?”

Pang Qian really couldn’t see how that was bad. She couldn’t imagine her parents giving her a baby sister or brother right now. She wouldn’t be able to accept it. What’s more, Gu Mingxi didn’t have arms. Wasn’t he afraid that after his parents had another baby, they would stop caring about him?

Although it wasn’t really her business, Pang Qian couldn’t help but feel worried. She always thought that Gu Mingxi’s parents shouldn’t have another baby. She felt that she should get rid of Gu Mingxi’s idea of having a younger sibling. She said to him, “Don’t forget, your house only has three rooms. Your mom and dad use one, you use one and the third one is a study. If your parents have another baby, where will it live? Will it live with you in one room? Who knows if you’ll be kicked out onto the balcony to sleep!”

Gu Mingxi was so amused by her thoughts that he had a great big laugh. He shook his head and said, “No.”

“What do you mean ‘No’?”

He looked at her and said softly, “Did you forget? I already told you that the



company already started building a new housing unit west of the city. It has an elevator. The smallest place will be 90 sqm and the biggest will be 120 sqm. My dad said that he's already received the papers for changing houses. In about two or three years, we'll move there."

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Pang Qian kept working at Pang Shuisheng for a long time because of this. She found out a bunch of important information from Gu Mingxi. All current employees of the metals company, old or new, could apply to live in the new housing building. Seniority, job title and position, along with contributions to the company would be used to determine who could live there. Those who didn't already have housing were held to more demanding conditions. Older employees who already lived in company housing could still apply for the new place, but they would have to give up the old place, and they could have to pay some ten thousands dollars (RMB) as compensation for moving to a bigger house.

Pang Qian actually didn't want to live in a big house. She didn't quite know why, but knowing that Gu Mingxi was going to move away made her heart feel a bit uncomfortable, as if she couldn't bear it. She pestered Pang Shuisheng to turn in their current house, but he felt that it wasn't necessary. The Golden Compound was already sufficiently large and it was located at the heart of the city. Exchanging that to live in a place where even birds don't shit (a remote, desolate place), and having to pay extra money on top of that, really felt like a poor decision.

In the end, Pang Shuisheng was pestered so much by Pang Qian that he decided to discuss the conditions.

"I can put in an application, but you have to promise me that you'll test into Excellence High."

Pang Qian, "!"

Pang Shuisheng pulled out a cigarette. "The high school entrance exam is in two years. If you can get into Excellence High, and the construction on the house is complete, then we'll move. If you don't get in, then I'll ask for the application back and we'll treat it as if none of this happened. Do you agree?"

"..." Pang Qian clenched her teeth. "Dad, you're not lying to me, are you?"



Pang Shuisheng knocked her on the head, “When have I ever lied to you? What, you don’t have the confidence?”

Pang Qian carefully thought it over for half an hour. Then she clenched her hand and promised, “Who doesn’t have confidence?! It’s a deal!”

A few days later, Pang Shuisheng put in an application to the company for a change of residence. Carrying her backpack, Pang Qian knocked on Gu Mingxi’s front door.

When she went into Gu Mingxi’s room, the boy was extremely surprised. Pang Qian sat down in front of him and noisily pulled out her notebook from her backpack. As she was pulling things out, she said, “Gu Mingxi, I’ll come over every day to do homework from now on. When I don’t understand, you’ll explain it to me.”

“Oh...” Gu Mingxi nodded, but couldn’t help asking, “Pang Pang, what’s going on?”

“Nothing,” Pang Qian shook her head. With a calm expression, she asked, “Gu Mingxi, can you get me into Excellence High?”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 17

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 17 Inconceivable

*If you want to be fair, then let's use paper scissors rock!*

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While Jin Ai'hua and Pang Shuisheng were watching TV, she asked him, "You really want to move?"

Pang Shuisheng looked over at her. "How can that be?"

"Then why did you submit an application?" Jin Ai'hua didn't understand. "You even told Pang Qian. I think she's taking it to be real, and she's working pretty hard recently."

Pang Shuisheng waved his hand in dismissal, "You still don't understand our daughter? Considering her level and the fact that she loses interest easily, I'll have to set off fireworks if she makes it into General High. Let alone Excellence!"

Jin Ai'hua didn't like to hear that. "Qian Qian isn't stupid. What if she really does make it in?"

Pang Shuisheng smiled and said, "If Qian Qian really does make it in, I'll happily give up this house! You still have ten more years before you can retire, and I still have another 19 years. The factory is moving to the western side. If we have to take the shuttle bus to work every day, it will be tiring, so why not just live in the new housing? If we're lucky, we'll even be able to stay neighbors with Guoxiang and Ah Han."

Jin Ai'hua was silent for a moment, then said, "I wouldn't want to be neighbors with Guoxiang and Ah Han."

"Why?" Pang Shuisheng asked in surprised. "Aren't you and Ah Han just like sisters?"



“Because of Qian Qian.” Jin Ai’hua sighed and continued, “I keep thinking that Gu Mingxi likes our Qian Qian. Even when she messes with him, he doesn’t get angry. What if they start liking each other when they get older?”

Pang Shuisheng laughed out loud. “What are you talking about? You’re overthinking things, surely. How old are they to fall in love?”

“What are you laughing at?!” Jin Ai’hua poked at Pang Shuisheng’s arm. “I’m serious. If Qian Qian and Mingxi start dating later, then what do we do?”

Pang Shuisheng didn’t understand what she was worried about. “Let’s not talk about these things that are ten years away. Even if Qian Qian and Mingxi did start dating, so what? Mingxi is a good kid. His family and ours know each other very well. I don’t think there’s any problem.”

Jin Ai’hua was incredulous. “Pang Shuisheng, are you crazy? Gu Mingxi doesn’t have arms! Even if he graduates from university, that doesn’t mean that he can get a job. And do you know, Ah Han told me that Mingxi has a lot of things he needs help doing in everyday life. When he’s out, he can’t even use the restroom on his own! Do you want our Qian Qian to marry him and become his nanny?! Look at how much Qian Qian does now. I don’t want her to marry Mingxi and live a life of difficulty.”

Then, their door was pushed open. A small head probed inside, and with a pleased voice, “Mom, I’m done with my homework. Can I watch TV? Just ten minutes is fine.”

Pang Shuisheng couldn’t help but laugh. He waved her in. “Come in. Oh, there’s a box of chocolate cones in the freezer. If you want to eat, you can take one.”

Pang Qian cheered, “Long live, Father!”

Elated, she went to get a cone. Pang Shuisheng said quietly to Jin Ai’hua, “Don’t think about those things. Look at how old our daughter is. Didn’t her *that* still not come yet? What are you even worried about? Our daughter is still a child.”

Jin Ai’hua was about to retort when Pang Qian walked in. She was licking her ice cream as she sat down next to Pang Shuisheng and started watching the TV



show. Soon after, she started asking her dad about what had happened previously in the show.

Seeing Pang Qian's face beaming with joy, Jin Ai'hua finally closed her mouth and didn't say anything.

It was indeed true that Pang Qian hadn't gotten her first period yet.

Her height and body type were average compared to other girls her age. Two small bumps had developed on her chest, though not to the extent of needing a bra. Jin Ai'hua had bought her a few white camisoles to wear as undergarments.

Summertime means thin clothes. The changes in her chest made Pang Qian a bit embarrassed, so she would walk with her chest slightly drawn in and her back erect. Jin Ai'hua would scold her. Once, she even urged her to pay more attention because she'd soon become a grownup.

But even until the end of the first year of junior high, Pang Qian's period still hadn't come. She didn't pay any attention to this, since she was completely focused on the semester's final exams. In the last month, Gu Mingxi helped Pang Qian cram. She tested into 26th place in the class, which was 11 spots higher than at the midterm. Her results in some subjects were better than her deskmate, Hu Tianli's.

Pang Qian was elated. This time, no one said she cheated. But her results had become a strange phenomenon. In the four major exams during the first year of junior high, she had ranked 41st, then 23rd, then 37th, and back to 26th, jumping around greatly. It was really inconceivable.

On the way home, Pang Qian told Gu Mingxi excitedly, "Next semester, I'll definitely make top 20!"

Gu Mingxi poured cold water on her, "If you want to get into Excellence High, you'll have to make it into the class' top 10 and then stay there."

Pang Qian was speechless, but she knew that Gu Mingxi was right. She'd also heard the story from Pang Shuisheng, about Golden Compound's Boy A and Boy B. She suddenly realized, getting into Excellence High wasn't as easy as she thought.

"Gu Mingxi, if I don't get into Excellence High, then what?" Pang Qian said



discouraged, hanging her head. She and the boy beside her were currently riding their bikes home. The big sun shining above their heads made them sweat as if it were raining.

Pang Qian didn't tell Gu Mingxi about her deal with Pang Shuisheng. It would be too much of a disgrace. How could she let him find out that she only wanted to get into Excellence High so that she could move houses with him?

Gu Mingxi also didn't ask Pang Qian for a reason. This silly girl would never know that when Gu Mingxi heard that she wanted to get into Excellence High, he was thoroughly and completely happy.

Seeing how low Pang Qian's confidence was, he comforted her, "There are still two years. Nothing's set in stone yet. When the time comes, who knows, maybe you're performance will be better than mine."

Pang Qian was so happy, "Ah? Better than you? How could that be! I'm not Xie Yi!"

"What is there that's impossible?" After hearing Xie Yi's name, Gu Mingxi's face reddened briefly. His lips twitched and then he said, "When I first lost my arms, they all said I couldn't go to school, couldn't take care of myself. Aren't I doing well now?"

Pang Qian, "..."

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Over summer vacation, when Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian's parents had to work, they would stay at home along. They weren't so small anymore, so their parents didn't bother the grandparents to come watch them. The evening before, they would cook some food and leave it in the refrigerator so the kids could eat it the next day.

To make things more convenient, Pang Shuisheng and Li Han agreed that the families would alternate cooking each week and let the kids eat together. Because it wasn't convenient for Gu Mingxi, heating up the food was Pang Qian's responsibility.

So, every day of the summer break, except on the weekends, Pang Qian spent her time with Gu Mingxi. Even when her friends invited her out, she would have



to decline, since she had to help Gu Mingxi with his meals.

That day, Pang Qian went to Gu Mingxi's house to eat. It was really hot out, and the temperature hit 38 C (100 F) outside. Gu Mingxi turned on the air conditioning in his parents room and had Pang Qian bring the food to the small table inside. Then the two of them watched TV as they ate.

Gu Mingxi ate with his foot very naturally in front of Pang Qian. The toes on his right foot were very agile. Whether he was using chopsticks or a fork, he did it as well as others. Pang Qian had long ago gotten used to him eating this way. If the table was low enough, Gu Mingxi could also serve himself. Pang Qian laughed crazily as she watched Princess Returning Pearl (My Fair Princess), not needing to concern herself with him.

After they ate, Pang Qian was too lazy to go home. Since her parents' room was locked, if she went home, there wouldn't even be air conditioning. It would be hot and boring.

Gu Mingxi didn't have any concerns about Pang Qian staying over. The only thing was that Pang Qian would fight over what to watch on TV. Gu Mingxi wanted to watch the replay of the France World Cup match, but Pang Qian wanted to watch Princess Returning Pearl. Gu Mingxi couldn't stop from saying, "You've already watched it twice! That's not enough?"

"It's not enough!" Pang Qian grabbed the remote control elatedly. Seeing how arrogant she was about it, Gu Mingxi suddenly stretched his leg out and grabbed the remote from her hand. Pang Qian swiftly moved her hand, smiling as she said, "If you want to be fair, then let's use paper scissors rock!"

With just one sentence, Gu Mingxi became extremely angry.

He bent his knees and sat down without a sound, hunched shoulders and droopy eyes. Pang Qian knew that she had gone overboard. She secretly took a glance at him and then left the remote control at his feet. "Okay, I won't watch. You can watch."

Gu Mingxi didn't like to put on airs with her, so he just lifted his head immediately and said, "Pang Pang, in the future, can you not joke about me not having arms?"



Pang Qian stared at him, unable to say anything.

Growing up with Gu Mingxi, she'd heard people making fun of him countless times because of his body. The mischievous kids in the compound even gave him some nicknames, "Little Cripple," "Missing Arms Kid," "Empty Sleeve Weirdo," *etc.* Because Pang Qian fought with them about it, Gu Mingxi has never cried because of these things before.

She always thought he didn't care because he really was amazing now. When she was around him, she rarely noticed that he was different from others. She was completely used to it all. But looking at things today, Gu Mingxi still seems to care about it...

As if knowing her thoughts, Gu Mingxi said lightly, "I don't care what others say about me. I'd just like if you don't talk about me like that. It's really not worth talking about."

Pang Qian nodded, "Oh, okay."

Gu Mingxi smiled. Leaning back against the wall, he kicked at Pang Qian's leg with his right foot. He said, "Oh yeah, I bought some new games. Do you want to play?"

"Sure," Pang Qian answered.

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Gu Mingxi walked up to the TV stand, pulled open the drawer with his right foot, and pulled out a few game cartridges. He asked Pang Qian, "Look, what do you want to play?"

Pang Qian went over to look. They were all games she'd never heard of. She wasn't that interested, so, "Let's play Super Mario."

"Hey..."

"Fortress 2 (BBTanks?) is also fine."

"..."

Then Pang Qian saw a few disks next to the game cartridges. On the disk was printed the images of the main male and female from the manga "Fushigi Yugi." She was super excited and said, "Hey! Gu Mingxi, you have this cartoon! I've



always wanted to watch it!”

Gu Mingxi didn't really have any memory of those disks. He thought for a moment then said, “I don't know, I've never seen them...”

Pang Qian cried excitedly, “I want to watch it!”

When Gu Mingxi was connecting the VCD player, Pang Qian went to his freezer to pull out two sticks of ice cream.

She sat on the floor, licking her ice cream contentedly. After he pressed the play button, Gu Mingxi walked over and joined her. Pang Qian handed the other ice cream bar to him and he took it with his foot, twisted his leg around slowly and started eating.

The time on the VCD player was passing by, the seconds changing, but the screen was still dark. Occasionally, some sparks showed up on the screen. Pang Qian was getting impatient and asked, “What's wrong?”

“I don't know.” Just as Gu Mingxi finished speaking, the screen lit up. Pang Qian's eyes opened wide. She never would have expected that kind of scene to show up... It was really inconceivable.

In an ambiguous light, there were white bed sheets. While “mm mm ah ah” sounds played, the image of a male and female pressed together, without any mosaic to cover, appeared in front of Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian's eyes. Pang Qian's mouth was already half open in surprise, completely forgetting about the ice cream in her hand. Drop by drop, the cream dripped down. Gu Mingxi reacted much more quickly. Not caring about the ice cream in his foot, he just dropped it to the floor. He quickly got up and ran over to the TV. For a moment, he was confused about whether he should turn off the VCD player or just shut off the TV. In a panic, he just grabbed onto the power cord to the TV and pulled it out. The screen went dark, and the sound that would make people collapse also disappeared.

Head covered in sweat, he breathed out a sigh of relief before turning around. He saw Pang Qian sitting there stiffly, motionless. Her face had a burst of red against white. Gu Mingxi's face was also burning. He even struggled to speak. “I- it was probably the d-disk was in th-the wrong place, d-don't...”



“Gu Mingxi...” Pang Qian’s right hand held onto the ice cream that was still dripping. With her left hand, she pulled down the hem of her t-shirt. She interrupted him, also stuttering, “M-m-my th-that s-seems to have come.”

Gu Mingxi, “!!”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 18

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 18 Can't Help It

*Oh... So you listen to Warm Harbor too!*

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Gu Mingxi went to the bathroom and looked around. He checked the small cabinet where they kept the toilet paper, but he couldn't find his mom's sanitary napkins.

Li Han paid a lot of attention to this. She kept her lady products put away well, and she would never walk around exposed in front of her son. Gu Mingxi couldn't find anything and returned to look at Pang Qian sitting on the floor like a statue. "That... We don't have any in the house, I can't find it. Why don't you go back to your house..."

Pang Qian's eyes were red. She shook her head and said pitifully, "I don't want to stand up."

"..." Gu Mingxi felt very awkward. "So then what? Should I go to your house?"

"Oh, that's right! There are some in my house!" Pang Qian pulled out her house keys and gave them to him. "In the cabinet in the bathroom."

Gu Mingxi grabbed the keys with his mouth and went out the door. He went inside Pang Qian's house and headed straight to their bathroom. He opened the cabinet door with his heel and really saw a several unopened packs of sanitary napkins.

Gu Mingxi had never examined these things. At most, he'd seen some TV commercials about it. He wasn't sure which to take. After thinking for a moment, he bit onto a bag that had five pink packs inside, and started heading home.

He didn't expect that, as he was locking Pang Qian's front door, Zhong Xiaolian would come walking down the stairs. Seeing Gu Mingxi's foot holding the keys to



Pang Qian's house in front of the door, he couldn't help smiling, "Oh! Mingxi, you even have the keys to your wife's house?"

Gu Mingxi was originally a bit nervous, but in that moment, he jumped slightly in fright. He wasn't biting on tightly, so the package of sanitary napkins slipped from his mouth onto the floor.

He turned his head and faced Zhong Xiaolian. She walked over and helped him pick up the package and put it into the pockets of his shorts.

"That came for Pang Qian?" she asked.

Gu Mingxi nodded as his face reddened. "She's at my house, so I'm helping her to get it." After a pause, he said, "Auntie Zhong, don't tell my parents, okay?"

Zhong Xiaolian was known as a gossip. Once she knew something, it would circulate around the whole compound. Gu Mingxi was very worried because Gu Guoxiang had told him that after Pang Qian finished eating, he was to tell her to go home. They weren't to go into the grownup's bedroom to watch TV or play games.

In contrast, Li Han wasn't so severe towards the kids. She'd always secretly allow them to play. After all, Gu Guoxiang was very busy with work, so he'd leave early and come home late. And after he came home, he wouldn't want to leave his room.

But it was 2 in the afternoon right now. Gu Mingxi knew that his dad was very smart. If he knew that Pang Qian was still at their house at that time, he'd definitely be able to guess that they were watching TV in the bedroom.

After hearing Gu Mingxi's words, Zhong Xiaolian smiled, "I don't talk that much. What's there to talk about with this? Hurry and go back."

Gu Mingxi felt slightly more at ease. He lifted his foot to open his own house door and was about to walk in when Zhong Xiaolian called to him, "Oh that's right, Mingxi. Remember to tell your wife not to eat cold or spicy things. And don't use cold water. Now she's growing up. You have to make sure you take care of her."

Gu Mingxi's face was so hot you could cook pancakes on it. He said, "Auntie Zhong, goodbye," and quickly walked inside."



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Pang Qian was in Gu Mingxi's family's bathroom using her first sanitary napkin in her life, her thoughts all in a mess.

She'd imagined the situation of her first period numerous times. Maybe it would be like Wang Tingting's, coming quietly when she was home by herself. Maybe it would be like Sun Mingfang's, coming a little when she went to the bathroom at school, and then having to put on a facade of calmness and buy a sanitary napkin from the school store. Not knowing why or how, she'd suddenly grown up. Or the worst was Zhang Wei. Zhang Wei said that her first period came in fifth grade, when she was attending the school's spring outing. She'd scared a group of boys there. She also thought that she'd gotten some kind of illness, and sat in the park, crying out loud.

After hearing those stories, Pang Qian even laughed out in amusement. But right now, she couldn't smile at all. She rejoiced that she wasn't at school, meeting with this kind of awkward thing with other students around. But then she also lamented that she'd made a scene of herself in front of Gu Mingxi.

Still, she was relieved.

Gu Mingxi, thank goodness it was Gu Mingxi.

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Her light colored pants were thin, the red liquid seeping out a bit. Although it wasn't very obvious, she still wanted to hurry home to change her pants.

Before leaving, she went to say to Gu Mingxi's parents' room to say goodbye to him. The boy had his head down as he was cleaning up the floor. His ice cream had already melted, leaving a puddle of white. Pang Qian's ice cream had also dripped on the floor. And there was also a slight red mark there.

Pang Qian was very embarrassed. Gu Mingxi was standing on the ground, left foot planted on the floor, right foot pressed down on a rag, continuously wiping. After the cloth was soaked, he wanted to wring it out. He could only lift the toes of his right foot up and carry the rag partly on the top of his foot as he walked slowly to the bathroom.

Pang Qian felt somewhat impolite and wanted to help him. She bent over to



grab the rag from his foot, “Let me help you clean it.”

Gu Mingxi quickly recalled Zhong Xiaolian’s words and pulled his foot back. In a very serious manner, he said, “No, you can’t touch cold water. Hurry and go home. Also, these couple of days, don’t eat cold foods like popsicles, fruit, and cold drinks. Oh, also you can’t eat spicy foods.”

Pang Qian twisted her lips and looked at him. “Gu Mingxi, you even know about these things?”

Gu Mingxi’s face reddened again, then explained, “I heard Teacher Jia say it, okay?!”

Pang Qian suddenly realized, “Oh... So you listen to Warm Harbor too!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian covered her bottom and left shyly. After she left, Gu Mingxi made several trips back and forth between the master bedroom and the bathroom, and then finally finished cleaning the floor. Then he thought of the disk in the VCD player.

He lifted his big toe to the eject button. After a long time, his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down a few times, and he put his foot down.

Gu Mingxi closed the curtains in the room and plugged the TV cord back into the outlet. He sat on the floor and thought for awhile, and then he carefully pressed the play button on the VCD player.

Soon, the image that left people restless appeared.

Gu Mingxi lowered the volume on the TV but didn’t want to mute it. In the quiet room, the moans of the man and woman were suppressed but clear. Gu Mingxi sat in front of the TV, very close to the screen. His neck was turned up, completely absorbed.

He also listened for any noises at the door, for fear that his parents would suddenly come home. His right foot hovered over the TV’s power button, ready to turn it off at any time.

Gu Mingxi knew that he shouldn’t be watching, but he was also very curious.

Origin of Flight wasn’t a particularly good school. Each year, there would only



be one or two fast classes, where the teachers would focus on preparing the kids for the high school and college entrance exams. The other slow classes were more like herding sheep. The adolescent boys and girls were very energetic, rebellious, and not the brightest. So during the flag raising ceremony each Monday, there would always be an announcement about a group of students' punishments.

Junior high, Year 2's so and so spread around a pornographic disc to the class – punishment. High school, Year 1's whoever was being lewd with some other person or their classmates and blackmailing the junior high girls – expulsion. High school, Year 2's so and so, along with so and so, were having relations on the school grounds during evening classes. Male is expelled, female is punished...

Sometimes, Gu Mingxi would feel that he and those students who got punished were from two different worlds. The students in his class were all pretty upright. Although some people would tease about someone liking someone else, everyone would join in. After a year, still no couples appeared in the classroom. But outside of their classroom, there were actually so many stories happening?

Gu Mingxi knew about those mysterious “small films” from Hong Kong and Japan, but he'd never seen them. When he talked to Jian Zhe, Liu Hanlin and other classmates, they mostly talked about ball games, cartoons, popular music, and test questions. If there was anything that had to do with “sex,” at most, it was the boys secretly talking about who the prettiest girls in the class and grade were.

Junior high, Year 1, Class 6's prettiest girl was Zhao Jing, the recognized class flower (prettiest girl), with large eyes, double eyelids, white skin, and cherry red lips. Liu Hanlin said he liked her. Jian Zhe said that, although she was very pretty, he thought Qiu Lina was cuter. Liu Hanlin joked with him that Qiu Lina obviously liked Xie Yi, that everyone said they were a pair, and he (Jian Zhe) didn't have a chance. Jian Zhe felt a bit depressed so he changed the question and asked Gu Mingxi who he thought was the prettiest girl in their class.

Gu Mingxi couldn't answer. Really, he couldn't.

He felt that his mom was very beautiful, gentle and demure, with graceful



facial features. Li Han had also told him that when she was younger, there were a lot of people in the factory that pursued her. In the end, her eyes were set on the then unknown Gu Guoxiang.

Gu Mingxi sat in the corner of the last row of the classroom, so he could see everyone. When he was bored, he would quietly observe them. During class, he could clearly see who was dozing off, who was reading comics under their desk, who was passing notes, who was posting a note on someone as a prank. After class, he could see who talked or joked with who, who was drinking milk, who had linked arms with who to go to the bathroom, who was passing out notebooks...

Of course, the person he looked at the most was Pang Qian.

Pang Qian, who sat in the opposite corner of the classroom.

Pang Qian was laughing, she was causing trouble, she was exchanging comics with Sun Mingfang, she was erasing the blackboard, she was secretly snacking, she was laying on her desk sleeping... Sometimes, Pang Qian would turn around and talk to Xie Yi, her eyes clear and bright, her smile especially brilliant. Pang Qian never acted fiercely toward Xie Yi. Regarding that one point, Gu Mingxi was a bit unsatisfied.

Was Pang Qian good looking?

Don't know.

Gu Mingxi had never asked anyone, so he didn't know what she looked like to others. All he knew was that in his heart, Pang Qian was fresh, real, and three dimensional. He'd witnessed her grow up from the day she was born. Every expression and smile, he understood them. Every sentence she spoke, he understood her true meaning.

Gu Mingxi really wanted to answer Jian Zhe that the girl he liked looking at the most was Pang Qian.

But he didn't say that, because he didn't think it was necessary. So he just went with the flow and said, "Of course, the best looking is Zhao Jing."

Then, on their way home after school, Pang Qian asked him unhappily, "Gu Mingxi, they said you like Zhao Jing? Are you kidding?! She's so fake, the way she



talks is so whiny. Do you really like her?”

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The youth sitting in front of the TV was sweating profusely. His thoughts were chaotic as he gasped slightly. His beating heart could shake his eardrum, clear and powerful.

Ba bump, ba bump, ba bump...

He felt his lower body changing, his body felt very excited. But in his heart, he felt a deep sense of shame and also despair. Gu Mingxi felt that he was turning bad. Really. How could he be so bad! Just like those students at school who got punished. How could he secretly watch this kind of film. He clearly knew that he should control himself!

But he couldn't control himself! He was very afraid, but also very curious. He felt remorse and guilt, but he couldn't help it.

In the end, he couldn't handle it. He turned off the TV, ran to his room and into his bed.

He couldn't be bothered to turn on the fan, the room was sweltering hot. On top of his bed was a straw mat, rough and hard. But he couldn't wait anymore and he didn't care.

His shoulder, missing an arm, pushed forcefully onto the bed, his swelling lower body rubbing continuously against the mat. It hurt but was also stimulating. That bone biting feeling was overwhelming, so he couldn't help groaning out loud, his shirt nearly soaked in sweat. He closed his eyes and he couldn't stop from thinking of the scene he'd just watched on the TV.

Gu Mingxi was 14 years old, and this was the first time he'd done this sort of thing. He didn't have hands, so he could only do it in this unsightly way. As he continued on, he felt ashamed, but he also couldn't stop. He could only tell himself that he'd only do this once, just this once! In the future, he'd never do it again!

In the midst of his daydreams, his tolerance hit its peak. The fire in his belly finally found its way out and spewed out from the exit. Gu Mingxi lied stiffly in his bed. He felt the indescribable throbbing on his tender body.



The moment he exploded, he opened his eyes. It seemed as if there was a playful girl’s figure in front of him.

He gasped loudly, unable to move, as if his body had died. There was a sticky liquid in his pants. His body was covered in sweat. With the tiniest voice from the bottom of his throat, he called.

“Pang Pang...”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 19

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again

### 19 Convention in Shanghai

*Gu Mingxi, you're rebelling?! You actually dared to kick me?!*

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Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi started their second year of junior high.

The schoolwork gradually increased because of the addition of physics and chemistry. Gu Mingxi seemed like he was born to learn. When he studied, he did it with ease. After each exam, he would be 1st in the grade. Xie Yi's performance went up and down, his rank unstable.

Xie Yi didn't perform well on the midterm. Teacher Cao even sought him out to talk about it.

Xie Yi returned to the classroom as if nothing were wrong. He still called for a few kids to go and play. Pang Qian was a bit worried about him, and unwittingly linked arms with Sun Mingfang and followed them out.

When they were walking down the stairs together, Pang Qian put on a light tone and asked him, "Xie Yi, what did Teacher Cao say to you?"

"Nothing much. She just scolded me for doing so poorly on the exam." He kept bouncing the ping pong ball against his paddle. He smiled and said to Pang Qian, "Actually, scoring 9th in the whole grade isn't bad. Being 1st or 2nd right now doesn't mean much. As long as I test into First High next year, it's okay."

Although First High wasn't the best of the upper tier high schools, it was still ranked. Xie Yi had his sights set on it because it had the best gymnasium, equipped with the highest end, most professional ping pong table. The city's student ping pong tournaments were also held there.

Xie Yi told Pang Qian this reason, and Pang Qian stared at him blankly, thinking he was so cool.



Hearing Xie Yi's answer, she looked at him admiringly, then asked, "Can you guarantee that you'll be able to test into First High?"

"Pretty much," Xie Yi grinned, his voice full of confidence.

Xie Yi had already grown a lot taller at that time. Just like Gu Mingxi said, spring was the time to grow. His bones grew taller, his muscles firmed. Xie Yi had long, slender limbs. His hands had even gotten bigger, not as tender and white as when he started junior high. It looked more like a man's hand. Probably because he played violin, his fingers were especially pretty. When they moved, they were so agile and graceful, not at all stiff and rough like the other boys'.

Pang Qian lifted her head slightly to look at him, and felt that he was becoming more and more handsome.

Since they'd just taken their midterms, no one was willing to stay in the classroom during the free activities period. The ping pong tables were full, and Xie Yi had to talk to some people before he was able to get one. He pushed up his sleeves and quickly started battling with someone.

There was a railing next to the ping pong tables. Pang Qian and Sun Mingfang leaned against the railing, whispering. They were facing the ping pong tables, but they also faced the school building.

While Pang Qian was talking, she casually lifted her head up and looked towards the window to her classroom. Suddenly, she saw a silhouette by the window, and Gu Mingxi's face flashed by and disappeared.

"Coward," Pang Qian said quietly to herself. Sun Mingfang asked, "What did you say?"

"Nothing," Pang Qian immediately shook her head. Then her attention shifted back to Xie Yi, battling at the ping pong table.

Xie Yi really was a shining star. He really put his all into it when he played. Eyes focused, posture natural and unrestrained, just like a professional athlete. The other kids crowded around his table to watch him play. Each time he made a good play, the crowd would burst out in applause. There were a lot of girls from other grades watching Xie Yi too, their heads bumping and whispering together.

Pang Qian was watching the crowd when Sun Mingfang asked her, "Crab, Xie



Yi wants to get into First High. What about you? Which *zhong* high school are you going to go to?”

Under Gu Mingxi’s supervision, Pang Qian’s scores had become very stable in this second year. Each exam, she would rank in the top 20. From Origin of Flight’s graduation records, the fast class’ top 20 students all had reasonable chances to get into a *zhong* high school. So at this point, Pang Qian had already become an honor student in her class.

Even though she didn’t like chemistry and she thought it was hard, Gu Mingxi never went easy on her. He knew that Pang Qian was like a spinning top. She moves a little, and if you don’t make sure to watch her, she would become a dead crab.

Pang Qian looked at Xie Yi’s fit body not so far away from her and said quietly, “I also want to get into First High. Their entrance score isn’t that high, easier to get into than Guangcheng and Ninth High. It’s just a little far away.”

Sun Mingfang giggled and said, “You want to get into First High because of Xie Yi.”

“No... I thought about it based on my own abilities. If Xie Yi went to Guangcheng, would I also go there? Isn’t that just looking for my own doom?” Pang Qian did her best to defend herself. She wasn’t willing to admit her intentions towards Xie Yi.

Sun Mingfang smiled, then asked again, “Then what about Gu Mingxi? Is he going to Guangcheng or Ninth?”

Pang Qian stopped in astonishment.

That’s right, Gu Mingxi’s scores were really good. He always scored a bunch of points more than 2nd place. He would definitely get into one of the best high schools in E City, Guangcheng or Ninth High.

Pang Qian suddenly thought of her original intentions for wanting to get into a *zhong* high school. At the time, it was because her dad promised that if she could get in, they’d move to the new housing complex. Then she’d be able to stay neighbors with Gu Mingxi.

But if Gu Mingxi got into Guangcheng or Ninth High, and she went to a



different school, wouldn't they still be separated? If that were the case, then what was the point of her deal with her dad?

Pang Qian lowered her head, and said a bit dejectedly, "I don't know what school Gu Mingxi's going to go to. In any case, whatever school he gets into, I wouldn't be able to get in."

"Says who."

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A clear, teenage voice rang in her ears. Pang Qian suddenly lifted her head and saw Gu Mingxi standing not too far away.

He was wearing a navy blue track jacket. His brows were slightly crinkled, revealing an displeased expression.

Gu Mingxi had also grown a lot taller. He'd be considered tall compared to the other students in class. He had a pair of long legs and wide shoulders that completely filled out his track jacket. Only, the sleeves under the shoulder were empty, and they would sway slightly as he walked.

Gu Mingxi walked over to Pang Qian's side, and leaned against the railing like she did. Pang Qian glanced at him, "Why did you come down?"

"I can't come down? This is a free period." Gu Mingxi had already lost his soft, little boy voice. His voice was rich and clear. It suited his gentle manner of speech and was very pleasant to listen to.

Pang Qian had a habit of quarreling with him. She pointed up to the classroom window, towards where his seat was. "You were just up there. I saw you, and then you tried to hide."

"I didn't hide. I saw you guys playing here, so I came down." Gu Mingxi smiled slightly, exposing his two canine teeth. Pang Qian couldn't stop from saying, "I told you not to show your teeth when you smile! It looks childish! I told you to get your teeth straightened, but you won't go!"

"Why would I do that?" Gu Mingxi closed his mouth, then looked at Pang Qian for a bit. Then he opened his mouth in an exaggerated manner, showing two rows of white teeth. "Look, my teeth are healthy."



“Ah! Close your mouth! Stupid!” Pang Qian pushed him away. His body swayed a bit, then his eyes bent and he smiled.

Sun Mingfang was watching Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi quarrel. At this moment, she felt she had to chip in, “Actually, Gu Mingxi’s canine teeth are really cute. He doesn’t need his teeth straightened.”

Gu Mingxi smiled at her. He lifted his chin triumphantly, and said to Pang Qian, “Look at how good Sun Mingfang’s sight is.”

“Get away!” Pang Qian pushed at Gu Mingxi’s back. “Why did you come down here?”

“I came to watch you play ping pong, Pang Pang.” He wasn’t at all angry that she’d pushed him. Pang Qian stopped then. Sun Mingfang was watching the two of them, and just then, they were changing players for the game. She immediately went up to play.

This left Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi on their own at the railing. They were silent for a moment, then both of them spoke at once.

Pang Qian, “You...”

Gu Mingxi, “You...”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “You first.”

Pang Qian thought of the question she was speaking to Sun Mingfang about earlier, and asked, “Gu Mingxi, which high school are you planning to go to? Guangcheng? Or Ninth High?”

“Why do I have to go to either Guangcheng or Ninth High?” Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian and asked, “Aren’t you going for First High?”

“...” Pang Qian was silent for a moment, then admitted with a nod. “Mm.”

“I’m also going to First High.”

Pang Qian raised her head toward him in surprise. Gu Mingxi smiled at her, “What, I can’t?”

“Why?” Pang Qian didn’t understand. “First High and Guangcheng can’t be



compared at all. You can obviously get into Guangcheng.”

“But Guangcheng might not accept me.” Gu Mingxi shrugged his shoulders, tilted his head, and looked at his own empty sleeve. “Just like two years ago. Just because my scores are good enough, that doesn’t mean they’ll take me. High school isn’t compulsory. And during Year 2 at Guangcheng, some students are chosen for a foreign exchange program. In Year 3, a lot of people try to get into the nation’s best universities. There are always a few people who get into Tsinghua or Peking University. That kind of school, to be honest, will be pretty tough for me to study at.”

The things he talked about were things Pang Qian had no idea about. Foreign exchange, national universities, Tsinghua and Peking? They were things she didn’t even dare think about. She stared at Gu Mingxi, a bit unsure of his thoughts.

Then Gu Mingxi said softly, “And if I were to go to Guangcheng, I probably wouldn’t know anyone there. If I think about it, it really doesn’t seem worth it.”

His tone was very serious, but Pang Qian said heartlessly, “Ha! Are you afraid that there will be no one to help you in the bathroom?”

Gu Mingxi’s face reddened, and said annoyed, “Pang Qian!”

Pang Qian laughed out loud. Gu Mingxi was so angry that he gave her a kick. He didn’t use any strength, like it was just for show. But Pang Qian acted like a rabbit that had been bitten, jumping up high, and then punching him with her fist. “Gu Mingxi, you’re rebelling?! You actually dared to kick me?!”

Gu Mingxi couldn’t block her, nor did he want to, so he just went along with it. He knew Pang Qian was like him, just playing and not putting her strength into it.

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Xie Yi happened to be changing out with another player, and saw Pang Qian hitting Gu Mingxi. Laughing, he walked over to them.

As he walked, he took off his jacket and tied it around his waist, revealing his short sleeved white t-shirt inside. After the workout, he and his shirt were covered in sweat. His hair was a bit wet and messy. When Pang Qian saw his slightly flushed cheeks and bright as star eyes, she immediately stopped herself.



“Crab, you’re bullying Gu Mingxi again.” Xie Yi walked over to their side and frowned at Pang Qian. She immediately responded softly, “I wasn’t.”

Her shy appearance wasn’t something that Gu Mingxi was used to. Xie Yi wasn’t affected by it though. He felt that standing was too tiring so he sat against the railing. “Crab, you’ve been here for awhile already. Why haven’t you played any games? Sun Mingfang even played two rounds.”

Pang Qian didn’t respond, but Gu Mingxi said mysteriously, “It’s not convenient for her to exercise these few days.”

Pang Qian, “!”

Xie Yi, “...”

Everyone was silent. Pang Qian felt embarrassed to death. She even felt like strangling Gu Mingxi. He also just obediently closed his mouth. In the end, it was Xie Yi who broke the silence. “Oh yeah, Crab, don’t you really like reading Cartoon King? Did you know that during summer break this year, there’s a comic convention in Shanghai. A lot of authors for Cartoon King will be there to sign things. Are you going to go?”

Cartoon King was a monthly magazine of comics. Pang Qian loved it. When she heard that, she got very excited, “I know! The more recent issue had an advertisement for it. But... Shanghai is really far away. My parents definitely won’t take me there.”

Xie Yi gave her a strange look. “Why would your parents have to take you to Shanghai? You can just go on your own.”

Pang Qian thought she heard wrong, “Go on my own?”

“On the train.” Xie spoke lazily, “I know a few friends from comics club and we were going to go together to Shanghai this summer for it. They’re even going to cosplay. They’ll probably perform something too.”

Pang Qian stared foolishly at him. Xie Yi watched as Gu Mingxi’s face darkened and laughed out loud. “Haha! Crab, I’m not inviting you along, but if you did end up going, we can also hang out together. I’m also cosplaying.”

Just then, someone called from the table, “Ping Pong King, your turn!”



With both hands on the railing, Xie Yi jumped down. He turned around to wave to Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, “I’m going to play!”

He untied his jacket and tossed it to the floor, then picked up a ping pong paddle. When he stood at one end of the table, all eyes were on him.

Pang Qian’s sight followed Xie Yi. After staring distractedly for awhile, she turned to the boy beside her who’d been quiet the whole time. “Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi! Do you think my parents will allow me to go to Shanghai over summer break?”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 20

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 20 I'll Go With You

*Because birds can fly.*

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During the first year of junior high, Pang Shuisheng ordered Cartoon King for Pang Qian. Since then, she would intercept the magazine even before it was delivered. She could read each issue multiple times. When the second year started, Pang Shuisheng felt that it wasn't quite right, so he cancelled the subscription. Pang Qian didn't care that much. If they weren't subscribed, she would just go out to buy each issue.

Cartoon King put out one issue each month. In the beginning, it cost 8.50 for an issue, but later the price was raised to 10 dollars. That was a quarter of Pang Qian's pocket money for the month. But Pang Qian bit the bullet and saved money instead of buying snacks. She never missed out on each installment.

She loved the authors in the magazine. Tang Weiqing, Lin Ying, Ding Dong... When she found a story and artwork that she liked, she never got tired of reading the comics. When there was something she really loved, she'd even make Gu Mingxi copy a scene for her. Who told him to be so good at drawing.

Gu Mingxi started taking lessons for drawing when he was 9 years old. At the time, Gu Guoxiang had already returned from his studies abroad. Seeing his severely disabled son, he couldn't help but consider what Gu Mingxi's future would be like.

Even if he graduated from university, what kind of work would he be able to do? Doctor, teacher, policeman... He can't become those. Driver, factory worker, chef... He can't become those either, let alone a technician or engineer like himself. With a heavy heart, Gu Guoxiang went for a smoke. He didn't sleep well for several days, constantly thinking about his originally smart and healthy son.



His son would never be able to become a welder like he had. He felt that his heart had been replaced by a stone, a heavy weight pulling him down.

In the end, Gu Guoxiang and Li Han decided to build his art skills in addition to his regular school studies. Gu Mingxi had always liked drawing. Three years after his amputation, his ability to draw with his feet was just as good as when he used to draw with his hands. The illustrated characters came to life at his feet. He did seem a bit talented.

So, Gu Guoxiang enrolled Gu Mingxi in the art class at the Children's Palace. He had class once a week. When junior high started, Gu Guoxiang found a senior expert art teacher, who came every weekend to give Gu Mingxi lessons. Gu Mingxi progressed very quickly. In the past few years, his use of color and composition were very good. But most outstanding would have to be his rich imagination.

The teacher said that Gu Mingxi's drawings never felt confined. He had a bold and exaggerated style, especially when it came to drawing animals. He drew rabbits with extremely long ears, and also cats kissing mice. When he was a slightly younger, he really liked to draw birds, all kinds of them with multi colored feathers. Groups of them with their wings spread, flying in the sky.

The teacher said that although Gu Mingxi was very mild mannered and obedient, he had a lot of his own ideas. He wasn't just a child who followed at someone else's beck and call.

Pang Qian watched Gu Mingxi draw birds many times. The paper was set on the low table. His right foot held a brush as he made several casual strokes. From the watercolors, a bird appeared.

He put down his brush and grabbed onto a tube of paint with his left foot. With his right foot, he unscrewed the cap. Both his feet were covered in reds and greens, but he didn't mind. Pang Qian rested her chin in her hands and sat at the side. She sighed, "You draw so well! Gu Mingxi, why do you like to draw birds?"

Gu Mingxi said, "Because birds can fly."

When he said that, he bit on his thin lips, eyes lowered. His feet were busily working to squeeze out paint, wash his brush, and picked up new colors. Human toes aren't very short, and they're stuck together. Only his big toe and second



toe could be used, and they couldn't be as nimble as fingers. But the young Gu Mingxi had to learn how to do things with his feet. He knew that in others' eyes, it was rather strange, but there was no other option.

He'd imagined flying, just like a bird. But what about wings?

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Gu Mingxi's painting technique was getting better and better. To Pang Qian, that was a very good thing. She would borrow comics from the bookstores, and when she found a scene she really liked, she would force Gu Mingxi to copy it for her.

The teacher's assertion that Gu Mingxi wasn't wholly obedient was because of this. Each time, he would listen and draw for Pang Qian. Over the years, Pang Qian had collected a great big stack of his artwork. Gu Mingxi would sometimes complain, "Why is it always boys? Can't you pick some pretty looking girls for me to draw?"

Pang Qian drooled over all the pictures of the wide shouldered, long legged handsome guys, and said, "What's so good about drawing girls? If you like them, go ahead and draw them. In any case, I don't want them."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian admired the copies that Gu Mingxi made for her, and couldn't help but say, "Gu Mingxi, your drawings are really awesome! You can draw comics in the future. Submit something to Cartoon King, and you can be a comic author!"

Gu Mingxi smiled at her and asked, "If I sell a comic, will you buy it?"

"Of course!" Pang Qian cried out excitedly. "I want 100 copies! I'll give them to everyone I know and tell them that my good friend drew it. That'd be super amazing!"

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips, and then he laughed.

Pang Qian said, "Oh yeah, when you get famous, can you draw me as the female protagonist?"

Gu Mingxi asked curiously, "What kind of story do you want?"

"Something like Fushigi Yugi. Tamahome likes Miaka, Hotohori likes Miaka,



Tasuki likes Miaka, and even Nuriko likes Miaka... Anyway, everyone likes the female protagonist! That would be me!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Many years later, this type of character would be called moe (orig. *malisu* or Mary Sue) ^\_^

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After talking to Xie Yi about it, Pang Qian went home and told Pang Shuisheng about going to the comic convention in Shanghai over summer break. Pang Shuisheng immediately refused, “What kind of joke are you playing? How can a kid go so far away by themselves? No way!”

Pang Qian’s stubbornness started to show. Every day after school, Pang Qian would pester Pang Shuisheng about having her parents take her (to the convention).

Pang Shuisheng looked at the time for the comic convention and said, “Doesn’t look like I can go. Work will be very busy at that time, and I’ll probably be away on a business trip for half a month.”

Pang Qian went to look for Jin Ai’hua. She said, “You’re already so old, and you’re still reading comics? These are all for children. Summers in Shanghai are very hot. If you want to go play, I can take you rafting.”

Pang Qian didn’t give up, and started to play a game of tug of war with Pang Shuisheng. Every day, she would talk and talk to him about it. And eventually, she wore him out. He said, “Three conditions. One, you score in the top 10 of your class on the final exams. Two, there have to be four people going together. Three, when you get to Shanghai, I’ll find a friend of mine to take you out to eat and find a place to stay. You can’t go around on your own. If you agree / fulfill all three of these conditions, then I’ll agree to let you go.”

Pang Qian was a very single-minded person. She didn’t even think about it before agreeing, “I agree! Dad, you’d better keep your promise!”

She started studying really hard. That left Gu Mingxi a bit dumbfounded. Aside from that, Pang Qian had also started roping in her friends, to pull together four people to go with her.



Naturally, Gu Mingxi was her first target.

“Gu Mingxi, you’ll come with me, right?” Pang Qian grabbed onto Gu Mingxi’s empty sleeve, staring at him with starry eyes. “Gu Mingxi, you always treat me the best. Also, you really like cartoons. When you get there, you’ll be able to see lots of authors who made comics you like. Go with me, go, go...”

With her pleading this way, how could Gu Mingxi refuse? But he also had a big concern. Gu Mingxi said, “Pang Pang, I can go with you, but... It’s not that convenient when I go out. I don’t have arms, so I’ll need someone to help me with the bathroom. And you’re a girl...”

Pang Qian felt that this wasn’t a problem. “You can ask Jian Zhe or Liu Hanlin if they want to come.”

Gu Mingxi really did ask the two of them. Liu Hanlin said that he would be going to his grandparent’s house over the summer. On the other hand, Jian Zhe expressed great interest in the comic convention. All youths would have a certain desire for this kind of excursion, especially when there wouldn’t be any teachers or parents going along.

Jian Zhe went to ask his parents. When he came back, he said that they agreed to let him go.

Gu Mingxi let out a sigh of relief. With Jian Zhe going along, he’d be a lot more assured.

With Gu Mingxi’s problem taken care of, Pang Qian was elated and went off in search of Wang Tingting, Sun Mingfang, and Zhang Wei. Wang Tingting said her parents wouldn’t let her. Zhang Wei was afraid to go. But finally Sun Mingfang brought some good news. She said she could go.

Pang Qian was extremely pleased. When she went home, she told this news to Pang Shuisheng. She boldly patted her chest and promised, “Dad! I’ll definitely make the top 10 on the final exams!”

She became very invested in her studies. She didn’t even watch her cartoons anymore. Every evening, she would carry her backpack over to Gu Mingxi’s house to work on homework together, and she’d ask a lot of questions too.

The day before the final exams, Pang Qian sat in Gu Mingxi’s room with a big



bowl of chilled watermelon. Li Han had cut up the watermelon into chunks. There were two forks for Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi to eat together. In the end, the bowl ended up in Pang Qian's arms.

She ate a piece herself, and then she fed a piece to Gu Mingxi. It was a very natural action. She used the same fork for both of them. Gu Mingxi also didn't refuse any of it, eating the watermelon, piece by piece from her hands.

Seeing Pang Qian in a daze, Gu Mingxi asked, "Pang Pang, do you really want to go to Shanghai to see the comic convention?"

"Mm," Pang Qian nodded. Not sure who she thought of, she blushed a bit. Then she said, "I want to see what Tang Weiqing looks like, and I want her autograph."

"Mm," Gu Mingxi lowered his eyes and didn't say any more.

Pang Qian closed her eyes and clasped her hands together. She murmured, "Gu Mingxi! Grant me strength!"

The final exam results came out. In all nine of her classes, Pang Qian performed above average. She just made it, placing 10th in the class.

Pang Shuisheng had nothing to say, only waving his hands in release.

The day they picked up their test results, Pang Qian shyly asked Xie Yi, "Xie Yi, will you be there for all three days of the comic convention? My dad already gave me permission to go to Shanghai."

Xie Yi was a bit surprised, "Really? I'll be there the whole time. My friends and I have a booth there too. Look for us. It's called 'Starlight Comics Group.' If nothing comes up, I'll be there every day. Remember to find me when you go."

Pang Qian nodded her head like a bird pecking at grains. She smiled like flowers and said, "Mm, okay!"

But, when school was over, she couldn't smile anymore. Sun Mingfang told her that she wouldn't be able to go to Shanghai over the summer. Why? Her test results this time were too poor. Her parents would definitely find a university student to tutor her over break, and she'd have to study every day.

What else could Pang Qian say? She didn't expect that Gu Mingxi would hit her



with another blow on their way home. “Pang Pang, Jian Zhe just told me that he can’t go to the convention, because his parents are taking him on a vacation. The tour group they’re going with just happened to be on the same days as the convention.”

Pang Qian froze. If Jian Zhe couldn’t go, that basically meant that Gu Mingxi couldn’t go. Didn’t that just leave her on her own?

Thinking of all her hard work to make 10th place, which was completely unprecedented for her... And in the end, it was all in vain. Pang Qian was riding her bike and suddenly felt very wronged. Her eyes reddened, and her tears started to fall.

In that moment, Gu Mingxi started to panic. He wasn’t afraid of Pang Qian’s loud, noisy crying. But seeing her tears fall silently then, he really couldn’t stand it. He rode his bike next to hers, and kept encouraging and coaxing her, but she didn’t hear any of it. Her tears just kept on falling.

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When they got back to the bike shed at the Golden Compound, Pang Qian didn’t wait for Gu Mingxi. She just carried her backpack and ran towards the building. When Gu Mingxi called after her, she ignored him.

That evening, Gu Mingxi went to Pang Qian’s house to look for her.

She held her knees, sitting in her chair. She gave him a look of resentment, her face unhappy.

Gu Mingxi sat down on the edge of her bed and said patiently, “Why are you getting angry with me? It’s Sun Mingfang and Jian Zhe who can’t go, not me. Why are you ignoring me? It has nothing to do with me.”

“How does it have nothing to do with you?!” Pang Qian cried out. “If Jian Zhe can’t go, you can’t go either! That just leaves me. What am I supposed to do?!”

Gu Mingxi looked passed her and said quietly, “Even if Jian Zhe can’t go, I can still go.”

Pang Qian thought she misheard. “What did you say?”

Gu Mingxi turned around to look at her, his face slightly flushed. He sat in the



shade of the room, eyes glistening, and said clearly, “Pang Pang, I said I could go with you. If you can’t find anyone else, then we’ll just go, the two of us. But you can’t tell your parents, otherwise they’ll be worried.”

“Really?” Pang Qian didn’t quite believe it, her mouth hanging as she looked at him. She stammered a bit, “But the bathroom...”

“I’ll figure something out,” Gu Mingxi said quietly. “At home, I can urinate on my own. When we’re out, I guess I can just drink less water...”

“You don’t have to go to that trouble.” Pang Qian squinted her eyes. Suddenly, in a serious tone, she said, “Gu Mingxi, I wanted to tell you last time. Actually, I can help you with the bathroom too. What’s so hard about it? When we were little, didn’t I play with your little bird all the time?”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 21

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 21 Crabs & Rabbits

*You're two lovers, and your families don't agree to it, so you're running away to elope?*

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The comic convention in Shanghai was held in mid July. Pang Qian always remembered what Gu Mingxi said, and she didn't tell Pang Shuisheng that Sun Mingfang and Jian Zhe couldn't go. She excitedly prepared a point and shoot camera (lit. an idiot's camera) and bought two rolls of film. She also prepared a thick, hardcover book to get autographs from the authors.

Seeing how enthusiastic Pang Qian was, Pang Shuisheng suddenly realized that she was already 14 years old. This could be considered her first time traveling. It would let her and her friends widen their horizons.

Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hus were just ordinary factory workers. Their salaries weren't high, and they weren't that aware of what it took to raise a child. So ever since she was younger, Pang Qian didn't have many opportunities to go out into the world.

Pang Qian has probably gone traveling twice. Once was when she was 8 years old, during summer break. Pang Shuisheng went to Nanjing and Wuxi for a business trip, and he also brought Pang Qian along to play. They took a coach bus there and back.

At the time, there weren't highways in place, so it was 10 hours each way by bus. Pang Qian got motion sickness and vomited a big mess.

When they arrived, Pang Shuisheng brought Pang Qian out to play. It just so happened that Lake Taihu had flooded that day. The water flowed out onto the shore, and it was nearly to Pang Qian's knees. It was quite an eye opening



experience for her. She ate some Nanjing salted duck and Wuxi spare ribs. When they were going home, Pang Qian even asked her dad to buy two servings of the ribs to bring back as a gift to Gu Mingxi.

After that vacation, Pang Qian talked to Gu Mingxi about it for several months. Every time they did anything, she'd said, "When I went to Nanjing, blah blah blah," or "When I was in Wuxi, blah blah blah..." Gu Mingxi never cut her off, listening to her over and over again. It wasn't until about half a year later when Pang Qian decided herself that it wasn't so interesting, so she stopped.

The next time she went traveling, she was 10 years old. She went with Jin Ai'hua and her grandparents to her grandma's hometown. After Grandma moved to E City and got married, she'd never gone back to her hometown. She'd gotten homesick, and after hearing that her younger brother had passed away, she really wanted to visit. Jin Ai'hua immediately requested time off from work, and brought Pang Qian, who was on summer break at the time, along as she accompanied her elderly parents home.

It was a small and old village located in the south. They had to take a sleeper bus for one day and night to get there. Pang Qian vomited again and got very dizzy. They spent more than a week in the countryside. Pang Qian spoke a different dialect to the children there, so they couldn't talk or play together. Every day, she just sat there doing nothing. She could only play with the small dog at her relatives' place.

After that trip, Pang Qian didn't have anything to tell Gu Mingxi. Gu Mingxi asked her if it was fun, and she shook her head, "It was so boring."

In comparison, Gu Mingxi had slightly more travel experience than Pang Qian. Before his injury, Li Han had taken him to visit her parents in the northern province every two years. They had to take a long distance sleeper train. After his injury, Li Han still took advantage of her vacation time to take Gu Mingxi traveling.

Gu Mingxi had been to Jinan, climbed Mount Tai, and had also gone to Shanghai, Nanjing, Jinggangshan, Putou... He'd ridden a plane, taken a ship, been on a train and coach bus. Regarding that, Pang Qian was always angry. She'd ask her parents, "How come Gu Mingxi can go traveling with Auntie Li, but



when you guys go traveling, you never take me!”

Pang Shuisheng had no way to tell Pang Qian that Gu Mingxi could go on those trips because Gu Guoxiang had given up his vacation days. He was an engineer at the factory. If he said he wasn’t going to go, and instead let his wife take his son, who would dare say anything about it?

So in front of Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian was just a little bumpkin. She hadn’t even ridden a train before. She went on and on about Shanghai this and Shanghai that, but she didn’t even know which direction Shanghai was from E City.

Pang Shuisheng encouraged Pang Qian to buy her train ticket on her own. He felt that her knowledge pool was really too shallow. She ought to experience more of the world.

Pang Qian had no clue about how to go about buying a train ticket. She didn’t even know which way to go to get to the train station. But she also didn’t dare to let her dad buy the tickets either, because she only needed two tickets. Asking her dad to help would be a big mistake.

And so, Pang Qian just invited Gu Mingxi along with her to the train station.

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The two of them took the public bus to their destination. It was summer break, so people were coming and going. It was very busy. Pang Qian didn’t even know which way was north. In the end, it was still Gu Mingxi who followed the signs and found the ticket counter.

Even when they lined up to purchase the tickets, Pang Qian stuck closely to Gu Mingxi, and ridiculously pulled onto the tail of his shirt.

Gu Mingxi said towards the ticket counter, “Two tickets to Shanghai for the morning of August 16th.”

“There are no more seats for the morning. There are seats in the afternoon, 2:30.”

“What about the morning of the 17th?”

“There are also no more seats.”

“Then I’ll take the afternoon on the 16th. Two tickets.” After a moment, he



said, “Auntie, can I also buy tickets from Shanghai back to E City for the afternoon of the 18th?”

“Sure.”

“Then I’ll also buy two return tickets.”

“Is 3 PM on the 18th okay?”

“Yes.”

“That’s four tickets total, 128 dollars.”

Gu Mingxi turned to see the muddleheaded Pang Qian. “Pang Pang, pay for it.”

Pang Qian quickly pulled out the money and handed it over, then she accepted the change and the train tickets.

They walked out of the train station, and she looked down at the four train tickets in her hands. She suddenly said with realization, “So that’s how you buy train tickets.”

Gu Mingxi was silent as he watched Pang Qian looking around curiously. He suddenly felt that here was a typical crab, walking out sideways from its nest. Once she leaves home, her courage probably wasn’t even as big as a rabbit.

On the day that they set off, Gu Mingxi’s concerns became a reality. Pang Shuisheng and Li Han kept telling Pang Qian to take good care of Gu Mingxi, and she had agreed very well. But once they got to the train station, she was just like a scrooge, tagging along behind Gu Mingxi.

Entering the station, getting bags checked through security, finding the waiting area, checking tickets on the train, finding their seat... Gu Mingxi truly felt that if Pang Qian were left on her own, she probably wouldn’t have been able to take care of it all.

It was Friday and the train car was packed. Pang Qian naturally sat at the window. She propped herself against the window, staring outside.

Gu Mingxi had already become the focus of all the traveler’s attentions. They all watching him quietly, with probing eyes. As usual, he didn’t care much. But it was a bit uncomfortable when people stared at you, so he turned to look at Pang Qian.



She was wearing a red short sleeved t-shirt, at the recommendation of Pang Shuisheng. He said that it was an eye catching color, so she'd be easier to find when she got lost. Her ponytail was tied with a wide, red hair tie. She continually stared out the window, as if watching some kind of shadow puppet show.

When the train started moving, Pang Qian's face clearly showed her surprise. Then, she quietly calmed down, leaning against Gu Mingxi's side like a good little rabbit.

It took three hours by train to get from E City to Shanghai. After awhile, that new, exciting feeling faded for Pang Qian. She pulled out a comic book from her backpack, along with a pack of Lonely Gods (potato twists). With some crinkling, she pulled open the package, eating as she read.

Of course, she didn't forget to occasionally feed Gu Mingxi some snacks. This action was too intimate. He soon felt the even more surprised gazes of the passengers around him, and his face burned up.

After the train had traveled for half an hour, the grandmother of the elderly couple sitting across from them couldn't help but ask Pang Qian, "Little Miss, where are you two going?"

Pang Qian lifted her head to look at her, her comic and snacks still in hands. She answered honestly, "Shanghai."

"Just the two of you? What are you doing in Shanghai?"

Pang Qian was about to answer when Gu Mingxi opened his mouth, "Our parents are working in Shanghai. We're going there for summer vacation."

"Oh..." The old woman seemed to realize, "You two are siblings?"

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Mm."

"How old are you two?"

"We're in high school," Gu Mingxi answered calmly. "My younger sister just looks small, but she's already gotten her resident ID card (you get this at age 16)."

The grandmother looked at Pang Qian suspiciously. Pang Qian's lips still had some crumbs on them. With her timid looking eyes and face, no matter how you



looked at it, she still seemed very young.

After a moment of silence, the old grandmother asked Gu Mingxi, "Student, what happened to your two arms?"

Gu Mingxi was wearing a white and grey plaid shirt, two empty short sleeves hanging on his sides. The nothingness at his cuffs made people really want to ask about it. He smiled slightly and answered simply, "When I was younger, I accidentally got electrocuted by a transformer."

"Ah... What a shame for such a pretty boy." The old grandmother's tone was filled with sympathy and pity. Pang Qian became irritable and pouted. She stuffed her comic and not yet finished bag of snacks back into her backpack. Her actions were very big and noisy. Then she put her head down on the table and slept.

With her head resting on her arm, she heard Gu Mingxi politely say to the grandmothers, "My sister is like that, very willful."

You're the willful one! Pang Qian vented in her mind.

"Little girls are always like that," the grandmother said. "You should tell your parents not to spoil her like that. When she gets older and joins society, looks for a boyfriend or a job, she will suffer from it."

Gu Mingxi said with a laughing tone, "I know."

Then the grandmother started to talk about her daughter-in-law. About how headstrong, unreasonable, and immature she was. Gu Mingxi didn't interrupt her at all. After about 20 minutes of talking, Pang Qian, in her drowsy state, heard Gu Mingxi say, "Grandmother, actually, my sister is very obedient and pleasant. She's just a bit immature now, but when she grows up, she will definitely be a very good girl."

Pang Qian had been pretending to sleep the whole time. Her arms had already gotten a bit numb. She didn't know why, but after hearing Gu Mingxi say that, her eyes grew a little damp.

Pang Qian "woke up" for the latter part of the journey. She finished a bag of dried fish, a bottle of fruit milk, and a stick of sausage.



Gu Mingxi watched stunned as she pulled out snack after snack from her backpack, eating until she was full. Finally, Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi if he wanted to drink some water. On such a hot day, he hadn't drunk anything for several hours already. His lips were visibly dry.

Gu Mingxi licked his lips. He really was very thirsty, there was no denying that. So he drank half a bottle of water from Pang Qian's hands.

The train arrived to the Shanghai station right on time. It was evening when Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walked out of the station with their backpacks on.

Shanghai was a bustling metropolis. The sun was setting then, and the sky was getting dark. Then the street lights and neon lights lit up one after another. Pang Qian stood at the exit of the station, looking at the crowds of people, the rows of tall buildings, the heavy stream of traffic on the road. She finally started to feel shocked, and she was also a bit scared.

She really was still young. What she'd imagined and the reality of it all were two completely different things. Her whole person stuck right next to Gu Mingxi, as if afraid that they'd get separated. Her left hand had a death grip on his shirt hem.

At the time, adults rarely had cellphones, let alone children having them. Gu Mingxi had a big cell phone though. Even Pang Shuisheng only had a pager. Pang Qian didn't dare think about what she would do if she were to get separated from Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi could see the panic in her eyes. He looked at her and said seriously, "Pang Pang, this is Shanghai, not E City. Listen to me. If the two of us get separated by accident, just stay where you are and don't move. I'll definitely find you, okay?"

Pang Qian lifted her head to look at him, and then gave a slight nod.

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "Let's go. Let's figure out where we're staying tonight first. Didn't your dad say that he'd ask someone to help us find a dorm to stay?"

Pang Qian nodded, then violently shook her head. "No, there's just the two of us. If the uncle finds out, then he'll definitely tell my dad. Then I'm done for!"



Gu Mingxi thought the same. But the two of them didn't have identification cards yet, so how were they to rent a place to stay?

He thought for a moment, and still thought that staying in a dorm would be the best. He told Pang Qian to call that uncle, but she wouldn't agree even if her life were on the line. "I don't want to call him. Gu Mingxi, you were the one who said we shouldn't tell my dad."

Gu Mingxi frowned. "If you don't contact him, then wouldn't your dad still find out? And he'd be more worried this way."

Pang Qian rolled her eyes. "Fine, I'll call him and tell him that that our classmate has a relative that helped us prepare a guesthouse, so we won't need to meet with him!"

Gu Mingxi was speechless for a moment. "Then where are we going to stay tonight?"

Pang Qian scratched her head, then as if to show she were clever, she said, "As long as we have money, why can't we find a place to stay."

Gu Mingxi was defeated.

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Pang Qian went to a public phone booth and called Pang Shuisheng's friend in Shanghai. She lied and said that she and her friends had already found a place to stay. After that call, she also called back home to let her parents know they were safe. Gu Mingxi also braced himself and told Li Han that he was safe and everything was going well.

After he hung up, Gu Mingxi looked over towards the train station. Actually, there were a lot of small hotels and guesthouses around.

He knew that this kind of place was very unsafe, but he also couldn't beat Pang Qian's stubbornness. Just then, a middle aged woman holding pictures of a guesthouse approached them. "Little brother and sister, need a place to stay? We have hot water, a TV, and air conditioning. 80 dollars a night. Want to take a look? If you like it, you can stay. If you don't, then I'll bring you guys back here."

She pretended she didn't see Gu Mingxi's missing arms. She just saw two distracted kids and quickly went to grab Pang Qian's hand. "Let's go, let's go. It's



already dark out. There's a car to take you there. It's very close, just around the way."

Pang Qian was already following her. Gu Mingxi cried out anxiously, "Pang Pang! Stop!"

Pang Qian turned around to look at him, a bit scared. She wanted to get away from the woman's hold. The woman laughed out loud and let go of her hand. "Auntie's not a bad person, I won't harm you. From the looks of you two, you probably won't be able to find a place to stay. Do you have your identification cards yet?"

Gu Mingxi was silent. He decided that this woman was just trying to make people stay at her hotel, and she wasn't like a human trafficker or something. It was true that they didn't have identification cards, so it was a bit tempting.

At that moment, Pang Qian, who'd been silent all along, suddenly burst out in tears. She ran over to Gu Mingxi and stuck close to him, her body trembling with fear. "Gu Mingxi..."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

The middle aged woman was dumbfounded. "Aiyo, I knew it. With just one look, you can tell! You're two lovers, and your families don't agree to it, so you're running away to elope? Ah... You two are too young for that. Hurry and follow Auntie to stay somewhere for the night. Don't keep strolling around on the street. I'll take just 50 dollars for the night. Tomorrow, you should hurry back home. The grownups must surely be worried to death."

Pang Qian continued whimpering. Gu Mingxi saw the sky darkening, and felt that he would soon cry too.

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Sitting in the van that clanked and rattled as soon as it started, Pang Qian was already so tense that she couldn't say anything. She sat in the back row with Gu Mingxi. Aside from the middle aged woman, there were three others who'd been pulled over to stay in their guesthouse.

After being on the crowded road for 10 minutes, the van turned into a small alley and finally stopped. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi got off the van and followed



the middle aged woman into a shabby looking hostel.

When they reached the counter, the middle aged woman greeted them. She checked them in brought them up to their room. When they arrived, she kindly reminded Gu Mingxi, “The room doesn’t have covers (meaning condoms). If you need them, you’ll have to buy them on your own.”

Gu Mingxi’s face turned sour. He’d already decided not to respond anymore. Pang Qian blinked and asked curiously, “What covers?”

The middle aged woman shot her a look and couldn’t help but sigh. “Ah... Really a sin. Such a young, little girl, ah...”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 22

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 22 Facing the Wall (to Reflect)

*Can you stop talking about my little bird?!*

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The middle aged woman took Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian to the second floor, and led them down a dark, narrow corridor. There was a musty smell in the air. Occasionally, they would hear sounds from the rooms on either side of the corridor. And very unexpectedly, a half naked man with a smoke in his mouth walked past them.

Seeing Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, the others would glance curiously at them. The sweeping glance over Pang Qian's body made her lower her head and hide at Gu Mingxi's side.

Gu Mingxi quietly comforted her, "Pang Pang, don't be afraid."

Pang Qian had never been to this kind of place before. How could she not be afraid? She could only stick to Gu Mingxi's side and walk next to him. The middle aged woman brought them to a door at the end of the corridor. When she opened the door, a sour smell poured out. Pang Qian wasn't a super spoiled big miss, but seeing that room, she felt it really was too shabby.

The room was very small, only 7 or 8 sqm. The walls were mottled and the floor was covered with a plastic mat. There were two 1 meter wide beds against either wall. The white bed sheets had already turned a bit yellow. Between the beds was a bedside table, and on top of it was a lamp and two cups. Across from the beds was a TV. Strapped to the window was an old air conditioning unit. But that stuff wasn't anything. The worst thing was that there was no bathroom in their room.

Gu Mingxi furrowed his brows in displeasure. Pang Qian pulled at his sleeve



and said, “Gu Mingxi, I don’t want to stay here.”

Gu Mingxi turned around and said to the middle aged woman, “There’s no bathroom here. How can we stay here?”

The woman turned around and opened another door in the corridor. So the bathroom was right across the hall. Inside, there was a squatting toilet, a sink, and a hot water machine. She said, “This bathroom isn’t communal, it’s just for this room. Everything’s in there, right? Your room’s at the end of the corridor, so other than the bathroom cleaner, no one else will come here. It’s very safe. And you’re both students, so I’ll only take 50 dollars.”

Gu Mingxi said, “Money isn’t the problem. Don’t you have any standard rooms? It’s okay if it costs more.”

“Little bro, you don’t have an identification card. I don’t dare rent you a standard room.” The middle aged woman continued, “You should know, if you go to another hostel, you won’t get any room at all. What if the police go raid the place? Then it’s trouble for everyone.”

Gu Mingxi was vaguely aware that what she was saying was true. He was seriously considering it, when Pang Qian pouted and let out a puff of air. Gu Mingxi thought a moment longer, then said, “Okay, we’ll take this room then. For one night.”

The middle aged woman handed the keys over to Pang Qian and then left. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian entered the room and put down their backpacks. Right after he closed the door, he lifted his leg up to open the window.

The room was very stuffy inside. After the window was open for a bit, a surge of hot air came through it. Gu Mingxi sniffled, and he felt that with just a little work, the air in the room had become a little fresher.

Pang Qian sat down on the edge of a bed, her expression crestfallen. Looking at the darkened and dirtied floor mats and the spider web in the corner of the room, she couldn’t stop from complaining. “Gu Mingxi, why do we have to live here? This place is so bad.”

Gu Mingxi, who was looking for the remote for the air conditioner, said, “Who’s the one who wouldn’t call their dad’s friend? We don’t have any



identification cards, so any better hostels wouldn't let us stay there."

Pang Qian pouted. Then she suddenly recalled Xie Yi. Xie Yi should be in Shanghai at this time. She wasn't sure where he was staying, but he should be at the comic convention in the daytime.

Pang Qian got an idea. She happily said to Gu Mingxi, "Gu Mingxi! Can't we find Xie Yi tomorrow?! Then we can ask him to help us get a room wherever he's staying at. What do you think?"

Gu Mingxi finally found the remote, and was sitting cross-legged on the bed as he examined it. After hearing her words, he looked up at her. After a moment, he said, "Whatever."

Seeing him unhappy, Pang Qian also became gloomier. Gu Mingxi turned on the air conditioner. It made some clanking noises and then the blinds opened, and there was a whirring noise.

Gu Mingxi went under the air conditioner and looked up at it. He murmured, "Why isn't the air cold?"

He set the temperature to 20 degrees (68 F), but the air flowing out was still warm. Gu Mingxi gave up and said to Pang Qian, "The air conditioner is broken. It's one night, just tolerate it."

Pang Qian was upset and yelled at him, "It's such a hot day! Even if there's no air conditioning, there should at least be an electric fan! Otherwise, how can we sleep tonight?!"

Gu Mingxi's eyes dropped and he thought for a moment. Then he nodded and said, "Okay, I'll go downstairs to ask if they have an electric fan."

He had just started heading for the door when Pang Qian jumped up and grabbed onto his sleeve. His shirt collar was pulled to the side. "Gu Mingxi, I'll go with you!"

When he looked back, Pang Qian was blinking her eyes at him. He laughed quietly and said, "Pang Pang, why don't we go out to eat dinner first. And we can take care of this stuff when we get back. It's already 7 o'clock. Soon, everywhere will be closed."



Pang Qian listened and nodded. Gu Mingxi walked over to his backpack. He sat on the bed and used his feet to pull open the zipper, then he pulled out his bamboo back scratcher, the “help yourself.”

He tilted his head and held the back scratcher between his head and shoulder. He said to Pang Qian, “I need to go to the bathroom first.”

Pang Qian stared at him and kept holding onto his shirt until they walked to the door. Gu Mingxi finally had to say, “Pang Pang, I’m going to the bathroom. Stop following me. Just wait in the room. No one will come.”

Pang Qian asked quietly, “Do you need my help?”

“No, I can take care of it myself.” Gu Mingxi smiled at her, then lightly bumped her calf with his heel, as if to placate her. “Wait a bit and I’ll treat you to KFC. There’s one near here, I saw it from the car on the way here.”

“Aren’t we each paying half for meals?” Pang Qian asked. “I brought 500 dollars with me.”

“No, you can spent your money at the comic convention tomorrow. Didn’t you say that there were a bunch of comic books that you wanted to buy?” Gu Mingxi smiled again after he finished. He raised his leg and opened the door, then went out.

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Pang Qian didn’t close the door all the way. She stared out at the door to the bathroom. Gu Mingxi was inside for a very long time. Pang Qian got really anxious and even wanted to knock on the door. Then suddenly, the door opened. His head was crooked to the side, as he walked out with the back scratcher.

He didn’t look any different, except the slippers he wore were a bit wet. His trousers too. Seeing Pang Qian staring at his feet, Gu Mingxi quickly explained, “This is water! I washed my feet, it’s not...something else.”

They locked the door and went out to eat KFC. When they left the noisy environment of the train station, the small streets carried a different, foreign style. Night was falling, but the alleys were still full of people enjoying the cool evening air. That kind of scene was a bit reminiscent of E City. Pang Qian’s



restless heart gradually calmed.

She looked around curiously, thinking about how she was actually a three hour train ride away from home, here in Shanghai. She'd be spending the night here with Gu Mingxi. She suddenly felt a bit proud, and said to Gu Mingxi, "This is my first time spending the night away from home, on my own."

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "Actually, it is for me too."

"You're not scared?" Pang Qian asked. "I really was scared to death earlier. I didn't want to get into that van at all."

Gu Mingxi just smiled and didn't say anything. Actually, he had been a bit scared as well. After all, he was just a 15 year old kid. Leaving home to go to a strange, foreign city would definitely make him a bit uneasy.

After seeing how scared Pang Qian got, Gu Mingxi had to suppress his uneasiness. He figured that the things he had to face were more or less just everyday activities, like going to the bathroom, eating, buying train tickets, *etc.* If he needed to, he could just ask Pang Qian to help him. There wasn't anything that was life halting.

But for Pang Qian, it was more of a psychological fear. He could very clearly feel how much she was relying on him. And curiously, that made him feel kind of happy. And then, he felt that he wasn't so scared anymore.

Pang Qian packed up their KFC dinner and carried it in her hand, as she walked back to the guesthouse with Gu Mingxi. Gu Mingxi asked the front desk if they had an electric fan, and the person working there answered impatiently that they didn't. Pang Qian shivered a bit from fear and tugged at his shirt hem. The two of them had no choice but to just return to their room.

They had dinner in their room. Pang Qian opened their hamburger box and spread the food out on the table. Gu Mingxi just stood next to the table and bent down to eat. Occasionally he would take a few sips of cola.

He didn't really like to eat Western-styled fast food, because there weren't any utensils, which made eating rather inconvenient for him. But Pang Qian liked to eat it, so he just went along.

After eating, Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian to go to the bathroom to wash up and



sleep early. Pang Qian listened and took a change of clothes and a towel with her. The bathroom was very cramped and there wasn't any hot water. Pang Qian couldn't be bothered to fuss about it though. She just clenched her teeth and shivered as she washed her hair and showered. When she finished, she went back to their room.

Gu Mingxi was watching TV when Pang Qian rushed in, wearing her pajamas with her hair dripping wet. He asked, "Was there hot water?"

She said angrily, "No, it was freezing cold."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then said, "Looks like we'll have to stay somewhere else tomorrow night."

"Mm."

"Then, I'm going to shower." He stood up and started gathering his things. Recalling the layout of that small bathroom, Gu Mingxi turned to Pang Qian and said, "There's nowhere to sit in there. I'm going to have to take my clothes off in here first."

Pang Qian was drying her hair with a towel as she watched TV. She answered casually, "Mm."

"..." Seeing her without reaction, he said, "Turn around."

"What for." Pang Qian stared at him. "This place is so small. You want me to stare at the wall? It's fine, just do what you need to. When we were younger, I even played with your little bird..."

Gu Mingxi was going to go crazy. He gnashed his teeth and said, "Can you stop talking about my little bird?!"

Pang Qian gave an affirmative sound and turned her head in a huff. Staring at the white wall, she said, "Hurry up!"

Gu Mingxi quickly took off his clothes. Taking them off was very easy. He didn't have to unbutton it because the neckline was pretty loose. He shrugged a bit and bent over, then tugged at the shirt with his right foot, and the shirt came right off.

His pants were easy too. They had an elastic waistband, so he just pulled a bit



with each foot and they fell down.

Gu Mingxi carried his clean clothes from his mouth. His towel was draped over his shoulders, and his back scratcher was held up between his cheek and shoulder. He mumbled over to Pang Qian, "I'm opening the door. Hurry and close your eyes!"

Pang Qian cried out loudly, "You're so annoying!"

Gu Mingxi quickly ran out, but he forgot to bring his keys.

Half an hour later, Pang Qian was lying on the bed watching TV when a knocking came at the door. She quickly became alert, got off the bed and walked to the door. "Who is it?"

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"Pang Pang, it's me. Open the door!"

Hearing Gu Mingxi's voice, Pang Qian immediately opened the door. At the same time, she complained, "You're the one who said to make sure you take the keys when you go to the bathroom, but you didn't bring them..."

Then she stared blankly.

Gu Mingxi stood in front of her, a faint glow coming from the wall lamp in the hall. Pang Qian realized that his body was bare, and he was only wearing a pair of underpants.

It had been many years since Pang Qian had seen Gu Mingxi's crippled body. The last time was probably when she was about 9 years old. She went over to Gu Mingxi's house to play. The 10 year old Gu Mingxi was wearing a white tank top that a lot of boys wore at the time. His round shoulders were prominently visible, along with the winding surgical scars.

What did Pang Qian say at that time? She vaguely recalled that she'd said his scars were terrifying.

From then on, Gu Mingxi never exposed his crippled shoulders in front of her.

Pang Qian had nearly forgotten about that matter, but after seeing Gu Mingxi's body then, she remembered it. Gu Mingxi was a bit embarrassed, so Pang Qian leaned to the side to let him in. He still had a towel draped over his



shoulder, and he'd changed his underpants. In a quiet voice, he said, "Sorry I forgot to bring my keys."

Pang Qian, "..."

"Stop looking at me. Turn around and let me put my clothes back on."

He'd already walked back to his bed to pull out a clean t-shirt from his bag. Pang Qian didn't listen to him, and quietly turned around to look at him. Gu Mingxi was standing on one leg, his body shaking slightly. His right foot was ruffling through his bag.

Pang Qian looked at his back and suddenly realized that he'd grown a lot compared to the thin Gu Mingxi in her mind. He'd gotten taller and his shoulders were wider. He wasn't as skinny and bony as before either, as if the meat had finally grown out. His legs were long and straight, giving the image of very smooth lines, looking like they'd be very strong.

She saw his shoulders again. Gu Mingxi's amputation surgery seemed to have destroyed his underarm hair follicles, so his armpit area was very clean and you didn't see any hair at a glance. The scars there had changed with time and got lighter, but the shape was still the same.

Pang Qian stared at his shoulders, wondering how she'd ever thought they were terrifying. Looking at them today, she didn't feel that at all. She'd often patted his shoulders, and when she touched them, she never felt that it was strange.

Gu Mingxi hadn't noticed that Pang Qian had been secretly watching him. Just then, he turned to the side slightly, about to put on his clothes. Pang Qian saw the spot where his little bird was. The little, soft thing from her memories had now become a big lump under his underpants!

Pang Qian's face started to redden, and Gu Mingxi seemed to feel something. He suddenly turned around and their eyes met.

Pang Qian opened, but then closed her mouth. Under his burning eyes, she slowly turned around and faced the wall [to reflect one's misdeeds]. Behind her, it was quiet for awhile. Then the rustling of his actions sounded again.

After a few minutes, Gu Mingxi said quietly, "I'm done, you can turn around



now.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 23

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 23 Night in Shanghai

*I wonder if we'll be able to see Xie Yi tomorrow.*

---

The room was lit by a fluorescent lamp. Pang Qian pulled the curtains closed. She and Gu Mingxi each lied on their own beds, watching TV.

Shanghai had a few TV channels that E City didn't have. Pang Qian thought it was really interesting, so she kept changing from one channel to another. Gu Mingxi couldn't stop from asking, "Can you stop changing the channel? Just pick one and watch it. Then you'll sleep in awhile."

"You're really annoying, Gu Mingxi." That's what Pang Qian said, but then she didn't change the channel anymore. A Shanghai channel was currently airing local news. After a few stories, the new anchor started talking about the comic convention that had started that day.

Pang Qian bounced up and crawled over to the end of the bed to see the screen. There was a ribbon cutting ceremony to start the opening of the convention. They had even arranged for a group of primary school students to perform. Then the camera pulled out to show the exhibition hall and the bustling crowd attending the convention. Then there was a group of comic authors from all across the country holding an autograph session.

Pang Qian was completely engrossed in the story. A few shots of the convention passed by on the screen. It looked like the place was split up with different areas for different comics groups. There was even a cosplay performance on the stage.

"Ah!" Pang Qian called out excitedly. "Xie Yi will definitely be there!"

Gu Mingxi, "..."



After the news report was over, Pang Qian left her bed. She emptied her backpack onto the table. Gu Mingxi asked curiously, "What are you doing?"

Pang Qian pulled out a bag of potato chips, "I'm hungry."

Gu Mingxi really didn't know what to say. Pang Qian sat down cross legged on the bed, holding her bag of chips. As she crunched away on her potato chips, she flipped open her copy of Cartoon King to the page about the convention. She said to Gu Mingxi, "The convention center's address is printed here. I wonder if we'll be able to find it tomorrow."

Gu Mingxi answered lazily, "We'll find it."

"Really? You know how to take public transport there?" Pang Qian thought seriously, and asked again, "My dad said that if we can't find it, we should just take a taxi."

Gu Mingxi turned over on his bed, his back facing Pang Qian now. He said, "I know how to get there. Sleep early, I'm sleepy."

Pang Qian still asked, "How do you know?"

Gu Mingxi replied snappishly, "I looked at a map of Shanghai before coming here."

Pang Qian was silent. She curled her lips, then after awhile, she said quietly, "I wonder if we'll be able to see Xie Yi tomorrow."

The youth on the other bed was quiet, his back facing her. His body moved up and down slightly, as if he had already fallen asleep.

Pang Qian had a few more chips. The crunching sound of potato chips was made even louder in the quiet room. Pang Qian looked at Gu Mingxi's sleeping figure, then put down her half-eaten bag of chips. She picked up her toothbrush and went to the bathroom across the hall.

When she returned, she lightly put down her cup. She walked over to Gu Mingxi's bed and looked at him. He was wearing a white t-shirt and beach shorts, lying on his side, closed eyes facing the wall. His sleeves were flat on his body, his breathing was long and even. Pang Qian unfolded the thin quilt and placed it over him. She said quietly, "Gu Mingxi, I'm going to sleep."



After she said that, she turned off the TV and the lights. Then she climbed into bed, wrapped herself around her blanket, and close her eyes.

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The room was dark and quiet. There were only distant sounds of traffic that came through the window and the occasional car horn.

Gu Mingxi opened his eyes in the darkness. He laid in bed for a long time without making a move, his body was a bit numb. And because Pang Qian had covered him with a blanket, his body had become covered in sweat. With small motions, he turned over to look at Pang Qian on the other bed. In the dark room, he could only make out the outline of her body. She was probably also very hot. She'd already kicked her blanket off to the side and her limbs were spread across the bed.

Gu Mingxi left his bed and walked to the door. As expected, when Pang Qian returned from brushing her teeth, she hadn't locked the door. He locked it and then walked back to his bed with light steps, and gently laid down on the bed.

His heart was bursting with some strange feeling. In a foreign city, in a strange and unfamiliar building and room, lying on an unfamiliar bed covered with old, yellowed sheets... So he was spending the night together with Pang Qian like that. The window was located at the foot of his bed. It was still open, letting in a light breeze through the curtains. From where he lied, he could see outside.

This area didn't have many big, tall buildings. Outside the window, there was an alley of single-story buildings. The curtain over the window fluttered up and down. Gu Mingxi could even see the black-grey Shanghai sky. It was hazy, no stars and no moon.

Gu Mingxi was drenched in sweat. He was also thirsty and hungry. He only had a single hamburger and a cup of cola for dinner. For a boy at the peak of his growth and development, how could that be enough to make him full? But he also didn't want to get up to get a drink or look for food, because he would need to turn the light on for that and he'd make a lot of noise. That would easily wake up Pang Qian.

Pang Qian always got angry when she was woken up. When they were younger and someone woke her up, she would cry and make a fuss. When they were



older, they would often be late for school because she didn't want to get out of bed in the mornings. In the end, they always had to sprint to school.

Gu Mingxi knew that Pang Qian had been both nervous and excited all day. It must have been mentally draining, so she needed a good rest. As for him, he really didn't feel like sleeping at all.

After some time, Gu Mingxi finally started to drift off to sleep, when the fluorescent lamp in the room was suddenly turned on. He immediately opened his eyes and sat up. He saw Pang Qian sitting up on her bed, hair disheveled, eyes squinting. She scratched at her left arm and legs, crying out, "There are bugs! I'm covered in bug bites!"

Gu Mingxi looked around. He didn't have much care towards bugs one way or the other. Pang Qian crawled off her own bed to sit down on the edge of his. She showed him her arm and legs, "Look! They've already bitten me a bunch of times! One, two, three, four, five... Five bites! It's so itchy! Gu Mingxi, what now?!"

Her arm and legs were in fact covered in several bug bites. There were red bumps all over, and it was a bit nauseating to look at. Gu Mingxi knew she must be itching a lot. He got up to close the window and thought for a moment. "I'll go downstairs to see if they have any mosquito incense."

Pang Qian pouted and looked at him, "Hurry back."

"Mm." He stuffed some money in his pockets and left. Twenty minutes later, he returned, biting onto a plastic bag.

When he entered the room, Gu Mingxi saw that Pang Qian had shrunk into a corner, as if she'd seen a ghost. It surprised him. He put down the plastic bag and asked, "What's wrong?"

Pang Qian was carrying a pillow in her arms. Eyes wide, she looked at Gu Mingxi. "Gu Mingxi, there are cockroaches..."

"Cockroaches?"

"I don't know, it was really big!"

"..." He thought for a moment, then said seriously, "Just light the mosquito incense. Cockroaches are afraid of it too."



“Really?”

“Yeah.”

Pang Qian got off the bed and walked over to Gu Mingxi. With a slight complaining tone, she said, “Why were you gone for so long?!”

Gu Mingxi sat on the bed and pulled out the mosquito incense and lighter from the plastic bag. “They didn’t have it at the front desk. I went out to a 24 hour convenient store to buy some.”

The mosquito incense was still unopened. He bent over and used his feet to carefully, but clumsily, pull it out. Pang Qian couldn’t watch any longer, so she helped him pull out the mosquito incense and place it into the metal container. As for the lighter, she said, “I don’t know how to use it.”

Gu Mingxi stared at her. He picked up the lighter in her hands with his left foot. He gripped onto it firmly with his left foot and then pressed down with his right. Flames shot out. He carefully moved the lighter towards the mosquito incense and lit it.

“You still can’t use a lighter? How do you light the alcohol burner when we do experiments?” He said.

Pang Qian responded, not thinking anything of it, “Hu Tianli lights it.”

“Then how are you going to cook in the future?” Gu Mingxi wanted to laugh a little.

“I’m not going to learn to cook!” Pang Qian boasted without shame. “My mom doesn’t cook a lot. My dad’s the one that always cooks things. In the future, I’ll just marry a husband like my dad, then I won’t need to cook.”

Gu Mingxi just blinked at her, without a word.

After the mosquito incense were lit, the two of them returned to their respective beds to sleep. After they turned the lights off, Gu Mingxi was still unable to sleep. Pang Qian’s voice floated over in the darkness, “Gu Mingxi, are you asleep yet?”

Gu Mingxi pretended for awhile, but then let out an “Oh” sound. He answered, “Not yet, you?”



“Gu Mingxi, will the cockroaches crawl onto me?”

“...” He stopped himself from laughing. “No. I told you, cockroaches are afraid of the mosquito incense.”

“If the cockroach comes back, will you hit it?” Pang Qian said, “My dad can hit them. He smacks them with a shoe.”

Gu Mingxi answered, “I will. I’ll step on it and kill it.”

After a moment of silence, Pang Qian let out a sigh.

Gu Mingxi asked, “What is it now?”

“If I had known earlier, I would have bought return tickets for tomorrow afternoon,” Pang Qian said sullenly. “Tomorrow, we’d play for the day, then go home in the afternoon. We wouldn’t have to stay another night.”

“Why? Then we’d be really rushed and it wouldn’t be as fun,” Gu Mingxi said. “We came so far away to Shanghai. Don’t you want to enjoy your time at the convention?”

Pang Qian was quiet for awhile. “I miss home a little.”

Gu Mingxi turned his head and looked at her in the dark. He saw a vague shape huddled on the bed. He thought for a moment and then said, “Pang Pang, during the day tomorrow, we’ll go to the comic convention. At night, I’ll take you to Nanjing Road and then the Bund (waterfront area), okay? The Bund is really beautiful at night. And you can even see the Oriental Pearl Tower.”

Pang Qian was a bit amazed and asked foolishly, “Do you know the way there?”

“Yeah. I looked at the map. And I’ve been there before. I know how to take the train there.”

“Okay.” Pang Qian smiled and then said, “I wonder if Xie Yi will have time tomorrow. If he does, he can come play with us.”

Gu Mingxi felt a bit stuffy inside. His tone was also a bit harsh when he said, “Xie Yi came with his friends. They probably already have plans.”

Pang Qian thought a moment and then said, “That’s true. I wonder what



they're going to do. Actually, we can join them too."

Gu Mingxi nearly spit out blood.

After awhile, the room had become quiet and still again. The scent of the mosquito incense spread gradually. It was a strong smell, but it was also rather calming.

Since the window was closed, the room had become swelteringly hot. Gu Mingxi had gone from soaking with sweat to drying off, and back. He couldn't stand it anymore, so he got up and pulled off his t-shirt, sleeping with his upper body bare.

Very soon, his back was bitten twice by bugs. Gu Mingxi had no way to scratch, so he just had to endure the itchiness. He was dripping with sweat as he closed his eyes. He thought to himself, if the bugs stopped biting Pang Qian and bit him a few times instead, there was no harm in that.

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The next morning, probably because the room was hot and stuffy, and there was an unpleasant smell in the air, even the lazy Pang Qian woke up very early. Her whole body was sticky from sweat, and she felt it was very uncomfortable. She looked over at Gu Mingxi... He was shirtless! He was just laying there on his bed. He didn't even cover up with a blanket!

The morning sunlight streamed into the room. Pang Qian could see very clearly. She threw a pillow over at Gu Mingxi. "Gu Mingxi! You should be ashamed!"

Gu Mingxi hadn't slept for most of the night. He'd finally drifted off to sleep at dawn, when suddenly a pillow landed on him. He rolled over, surprised. He sat up in confusion, with two wide open eyes, his hair a mess, his body covered in sweat, and a haggard expression on his face. They stared at each other for awhile, and then he finally burst out in laughter.

"Good morning, Pang Pang." Gu Mingxi's lips lifted up in a smile, revealing his canine teeth.

Pang Qian smiled and said, "Gu Mingxi, you have eye boogers!"

"Hey!"



Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took turns washing up. After they changed their clothes and packed up their things, they checked out of the hostel.

In the future, they might live in a luxurious 5 star hotel. Or they might stay at a small villa on an island in the sea. Or they might go to a small vineyard, the aroma of grapes floating throughout the air. Maybe they would live in a university dorm, or they'd stay in a small hotel in some remote land. Maybe they could go camping and pitch a tent, or they could travel the world and live in hostels with strangers. But no matter where they stayed or what kind of bed they slept on, they would never forget this night in Shanghai.

This small hostel, hidden away in an alley... They didn't even know its address or name, but they would never forget it. Never ever.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had breakfast at a small shop at the entryway to the alley.

Gu Mingxi was starving. After eating a bowl of wonton, he had a tray of *xiaolongbao* (soup dumpling), and then he also bought two *youtiao* (Chinese cruller).

The tables at that shop were very low. There couldn't have been anything more suitable for him. Gu Mingxi crouched and sat on the small stool, his right foot resting on the table. He picked up one dumpling after another and delivered it to his mouth.

Pang Qian also ate quite a bit. After they finished eating, she plucked up a napkin and wiped Gu Mingxi's mouth. They paid and then they headed to the convention center.

Gu Mingxi had already asked for directions and knew there was a train station nearby. That was great, because the train stopped right at the convention center. Gu Mingxi felt like a load had been lifted from his shoulders. He and Pang Qian found the train station and stood inside, examining the rail map.

The moment that Pang Qian discovered she'd be riding the train, she grew very excited. She'd already forgotten the homesickness she felt the evening before, and kept chattering on endlessly.

The ticket stations were automated. Standing in front of the ticket machine,



Gu Mingxi directed Pang Qian. She was very nervous, and especially serious when she was inserting the coins into the machine. When the ticket came out, she finally let out a sigh of relief, and became joyous, “How interesting!”

She kept saying over and over, “So interesting! Gu Mingxi, when we go back, let me buy the tickets!”

“Okay.” Seeing her upturned face and shining eyes, Gu Mingxi also smiled a bit.

He led Pang Qian to the platform. After a short while, the train came roaring in. Pang Qian couldn’t contain her excitement as she stared at the train gradually come to a stop.

They got onto the train. It was Saturday, so the train car wasn’t filled with commuters heading to work, but there were still no seats. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi found a corner to stand in. Gu Mingxi leaned against a column and stood sideways, with Pang Qian in front of him.

Pang Qian was a curious kid, her head turning this way and that way, looking around. Then she saw how everyone was looking at Gu Mingxi.

Pang Qian really hated those looks, so she angrily returned their gazes. She stood quietly in front of Gu Mingxi, her right arm wrapping around his waist.

“Hey, it’s itchy.” Gu Mingxi twisted his body as he spoke quietly.

“I’m scared of the brakes.”

“The train doesn’t have brakes.”

“Ah...”

Twenty minutes later, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got off the train and exited the station. After asking a police officer, they finally found their way to the convention center.

After seeing the convention’s banner that she’d seen on the news, Pang Qian cheered, “We found it!”

The two of them bought an all day pass. The convention center was packed with people. Most of them looked to be junior and high school students like them. There were also some 20 something year olds and kids that were led by



their parents.

Pang Qian’s eyes glowed. Then she pulled at Gu Mingxi’s sleeve and said, “Gu Mingxi, let’s go find Xie Yi first!”

Gu Mingxi’s eyes darkened slightly, but still nodded his head.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 24

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 24 Aching Youth

*Pang Pang, you have to help me. I can't hold it in any longer.*

---

Pang Qian found Xie Yi very easily. He was in the exhibition hall for the community get together. What surprised Pang Qian though was that Xie Yi was striking a cool *poss* (pose), taking a picture with the crowd. Of course, most of them were young girls.

He had makeup on, and even dyed his hair. His eye makeup was especially heavy, so much that you couldn't even make out what his face looked like originally. Of course you could still tell that he was a pretty boy.

He stood very tall and was wearing a black, old-styled soldier's uniform. He had on a wide belt and epaulets on his shoulders, along with some shining golden accessories. Secured onto his back was a single, large wing. Pang Qian didn't see wrong, it was indeed a single wing. He looked just like a single-winged angel. Xie Yi's cold eyes stood out against the lively clamor around him in the room. Girls kept walking up to and away from him, but he didn't move. Occasionally he would shift to a different post, but he always kept a cold look on his face.

Pang Qian had been staring, and then said to Gu Mingxi, "It's Mudo Setsuna! Angel Sanctuary's Mudo Setsuna! Ah, it really looks alike! Gu Mingxi, do you remember? You helped me draw him before!"

Gu Mingxi knew Mudo Setsuna, but like Pang Qian, he knew nothing about cosplay. He wasn't that interested either. Pang Qian pulled out a camera from her bag and ran merrily over to Xie Yi. Gu Mingxi saw that Xie Yi had just finished taking a photo with a group of girls. And when he turned around and saw Pang Qian, his originally cool face broke out in a smile instantly.



“Hey, Crab!” He waved at Pang Qian. Then he saw Gu Mingxi beside her and offered a greeting, “Hi, Gu Mingxi. Where’s everyone else? Crab, didn’t you say that Sun Mingfang and Jian Zhe were coming along?”

Pang Qian answered, “In the end, they couldn’t come.”

Xie Yi was very surprised and asked, “Then the two of you came together alone?”

“Mm.” Pang Qian smiled and said, “We arrived in Shanghai last night and stayed for the night. We’ll take the train back tomorrow afternoon.”

Xie Yi said happily, “Then, if you’re free tomorrow morning, you can come watch my competition.”

Pang Qian didn’t even ask what kind of competition it was, and she’d already nodded her head, “Okay, okay. Tomorrow morning, we’re free!”

Seeing the camera in Pang Qian’s hands, Xie Yi smiled and asked, “Crab, you want a picture with me?”

Pang Qian nodded shyly. Xie Yi called over one of his friends to help take the picture. Pang Qian stood next to him, and he struck a classic Mudo Setsuna pose. A *kacha* sound rang, and like that, they’d taken a picture.

Xie Yi suddenly recalled Gu Mingxi standing on the side, so he turned around to ask, “Gu Mingxi, do you want to take a photo together?”

Gu Mingxi started shaking his head, when Pang Qian had already walked to him and started pushing him forward. “Let’s take one together.”

Gu Mingxi could only just stand to Pang Qian’s right. Xie Yi stood to her left, but he didn’t strike another pose. Instead, he naturally draped his arm across Pang Qian’s shoulders. She was taken by surprise, and her face rapidly turned red. Gu Mingxi looked down to see the hand that Xie Yi had on Pang Qian’s shoulders, and then he silently frowned.

They finished taking their photos, and then Xie Yi took off the wing on his back and led Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi to Starlight Comics Group’s booth. Pang Qian saw a few boys and girls who were all a few years older than them. The oldest was probably about 20 years old. Some of them also had on costumes with



heavy makeup, and they were helping each other touch up their outfits. Xie Yi made some introductions, and then he sat down. He turned and smiled at Pang Qian, "This wing is really tiring, it was extremely heavy."

Pang Qian responded eagerly, "Can I try it on?"

"Sure." Xie Yi got up and helped Pang Qian with the belt for the wing. Pang Qian turned her head back to look at the wing, and then she looked at Gu Mingxi with a smile, "Does it look good?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. He had been standing silently at the corner of the booth.

There were a few folding stools at the booth. Pang Qian sat on one as she chatted with Xie Yi. She lifted her head and looked around at the artwork on display at the booth. There were various sizes in black and white and in color. After examining them carefully, she said with surprise, "These are amazing!"

She tugged at Gu Mingxi to take a look. Then she felt a bit regretful, as she whispered into his ear, "If I knew about it sooner, I'd have brought some pieces that you drew. We could have put them on display a bit. Your drawings are as good as these."

Gu Mingxi didn't seem very interested, not even giving a casual reply. Pang Qian looked at him and asked, "What's wrong?"

Gu Mingxi looked down, and in a low voice, replied, "We arrived awhile ago, and you've kept staying here. Don't you plan to take a look around? Didn't you want one of the comic author's autographs?"

"Don't we still have all afternoon? Why are you in such a rush?"

"I'm not in a rush. Xie Yi and everyone else here have a booth set up. You're not involved with it, and you're not part of their club. Why are you staying here?"

"I'm just looking a bit. Why, I can't?" Pang Qian said in a muffled voice. "I'm going to stay here a little longer."

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips as he looked at her. His eyes were dark and deep as he said, "Then you stay here. I'm going to go look around."

He had thought that Pang Qian would follow along after a moment, but he



hadn't expected her to say, "Okay. Go take a walk around. Don't forget to come back to find me later."

Gu Mingxi's teeth were nearly gnashed to bits, but he couldn't take back the words he'd already spoken. With a straight face, his backpack on his shoulders, he walked out from that convention hall. Xie Yi was handing out pamphlets at the side of their booth. When he saw Gu Mingxi leave, he asked Pang Qian curiously, "Where did Gu Mingxi go?"

Pang Qian pouted, then said, "I don't know. He went off to play on his own."

Xie Yi walked over to her and asked, "What about you? Why didn't you go with him?"

Pang Qian opened her mouth, but she couldn't answer. Xie Yi suddenly smiled and said, "Oh yeah, didn't you say that you liked Tang Weiqing?"

"Mm," Pang Qian nodded. "She's my favorite."

"Do you want to take a photo with her? An autograph?" Xie Yi smiled, showing a very pleased expression. "When I'm done here, I'll take you to see her. I know her."

"Really?"! Pang Qian was extremely pleasantly surprised. She said, "Why didn't you say so earlier? Look, Gu Mingxi already ran off!"

Still smiling, Xie Yi said, "We'll wait for him."

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Gu Mingxi carried his backpack and visited several exhibition halls.

At first, he'd felt a bit dispirited. Even when he was looking at all the artists' works, he couldn't get rid of the feeling. That is, until he saw a demonstration by his favorite illustrator. His heart gradually calmed as he watched and learned.

The convention center was very large. The organizers also put a lot of thought and effort into planning it. There was one hall that displayed works by authors from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and other people overseas. There was a hall for original works by mainland authors. There was also an exhibition for animated works and other products. There was even a comic contest there.

Gu Mingxi stayed in the competition hall for a long time. He stood on the side



and watched the competitors draw. There were some older people who talked to him. Because of his special and eye-catching body, there were always curious people who would ask a few questions.

Gu Mingxi was always polite and courteous with these types of people. Sometimes, people would be too forthright with their questions, so he would just smile in response.

When he got to the booths selling things related to animations, Gu Mingxi looked around and an idea gradually floated to his mind.

He walked past booth after booth until he stopped in front of one, the one for the Cartoon King publications. They were selling a lot of their artists' work on bookmarks, postcards, notebooks, and other little things.

Gu Mingxi saw a set of Tang Weiqing postcards, a very pretty set. There were 12 cards.

"Give me a box of that. How much?" He pointed towards the box of postcards with his chin and asked the young girl at the booth.

She looked to be about 20 years old. After seeing his empty sleeves, she felt a bit awkward, but answered, "30."

Gu Mingxi nodded. Recalling that his money was in his backpack, he wriggled his shoulders and got his bag off. After considering for a moment, he just sat on the floor and used his right foot to pull out a pouch. He grabbed out a 100 dollar bill.

All around him, people's eyes were drawn to him. He had on a white t-shirt, beige shorts, and there were blue flip flops on his feet.

He stood up and lifted his leg up high, dropping the money onto the booth counter. He looked at the girl a bit apologetically.

She hesitated for a moment before accepting the money. She took out 70 dollars for change, and Gu Mingxi said, "Can I trouble you to put the change into my trouser pockets? Thank you."

The girl walked out from behind the booth and silently pushed the money into his pocket. She asked, "Should I put the postcards into your bag?"



“Mm, thank you.” Gu Mingxi smile shyly at her. The girl felt a bit upset. After she put the cards into his bag and zipped it up, she helped him return the backpack onto his shoulders.

“Student, are you here by yourself?” she couldn’t help but ask.

Gu Mingxi shook his head, “No, I came with a friend.”

“Are you buying the Tang Weiqing postcards for them?”

Gu Mingxi’s face blushed slightly as he said, “Mm, it’s a gift. She really likes Tang Weiqing.”

The girl smiled and picked up a small badge from the table, stuffing it into Gu Mingxi’s bag. “This is a gift from me. You can give it to your friend too.”

Gu Mingxi, “That doesn’t seem right.”

“It’s fine, it’s just a small token, not worth much.” She looked at him, eyes sharp. “Be careful of your safety. It’s best to stay with a group. There are thieves here.”

Because he’d bought something, and even gotten a free gift, Gu Mingxi felt very happy. He counted the time and figured he’d been gone for about half an hour. He thought that Pang Qian had probably had enough time there. Most importantly, Gu Mingxi drank half a bottle of water at breakfast, and he’d eaten a bowl of wonton soup. At that moment, he urgently needed the restroom.

He returned to the club exhibition hall and found Starlight Comics’ booth. When the people there saw him, they smiled at him. But as he looked around, Gu Mingxi didn’t see a hint of Pang Qian or Xie Yi.

He asked a girl who looked like she was in university, “Sis, do you know where Xie Yi and my friend went?”

“Ah, they looked like they were going for a walk.” The girl asked her friend beside her, “Hey, do you know where Xiao Xie (lit. little Xie) and that girl went?”

“Don’t know. I think Xiao Xie said he was taking the girl to see one of his friends.”

“They left awhile ago, maybe 20 minutes.”



“Student, why don’t you wait here for them. They’ll probably be back soon.”

With everyone talking all at once, Gu Mingxi could only wait for them there. Someone brought him a stool, and he said a word of thanks and sat down.

The minutes ticked past. Gu Mingxi sat upright, his head slightly lowered. Xie Yi’s friends just thought he was someone of few words. Thinking about his disability as well, they thought that it was pretty normal for him to be somewhat withdrawn. So no one approached him to talk.

Gu Mingxi wanted to go out to find Pang Qian, but in the end, he needed the restroom urgently. He probably wouldn’t be able to hold it in and walk around.

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Pang Qian and Xie Yi still hadn’t returned. Gu Mingxi didn’t know how long he waited for. The exhibition hall was very crowded, the attendees coming and going in waves. Some people were distributing flyers, and a bunch of them were also cosplaying, just like Xie Yi. People came in groups of twos and threes to snap a photo.

Gu Mingxi’s forehead was covered in cold sweat. The clothes on his back were slightly damp and sticky. His whole body was stiff, his two legs held tightly together. His lower abdomen felt like it would explode, and he didn’t dare to move.

He could find someone to help him, but he didn’t want to. This could be considered that laughable thing called pride. He didn’t know them, so for him to make such a request, and in such haste, what would these people think of him? Moreover, these people were Xie Yi’s friends.

The girl from earlier started talking to the others, “It’s noon, we should order lunch. Why hadn’t Xiao Xie come back yet?”

“Maybe he took that girl out to eat?”

“Really? Their friend is still here.” The girl turned around and asked Gu Mingxi, “Student, we’re ordering lunch. Why don’t you have lunch with us?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. His voice hoarse, he said, “No, thanks. I’ll wait for my friend to come back to eat.”



“They still haven’t come back. They’ve been gone for two hours, so they probably ate outside already.”

Gu Mingxi bit his lip, then shook his head again. “No, my friend will be back.”

Seeing how resolute he was, the girl didn’t press any further. She calculated the number of people and then ordered lunch.

Gu Mingxi was silent again, sitting by himself in the corner, waiting.

Finally, when the meal boxes arrived, Xie Yi and Pang Qian also returned. They were chatting and smiling, in very high spirits. Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi and her eyes lit up. She ran over to him. “Gu Mingxi! Do you know how many autographs I got? And they didn’t just sign, they signed a drawing they drew! Even people who lined up wouldn’t be able to get it! I...”

She didn’t continue speaking because Gu Mingxi’s gaze cut her off.

“Did you eat yet?” he asked.

She shook her head. Xie Yi walked over and said, “I ordered two portions for you guys. Let’s all eat here together.”

“No need.” Gu Mingxi got up slowly. To Pang Qian, he said, “We’ll go out to eat. Let’s not bother them.”

Seeing how serious he was, her heart thumped, and she nodded, “Mm.”

She turned back to look at Xie Yi, “Xie Yi, thanks for taking me to meet so many cartoon authors. Come eat lunch with us, my treat.”

Xie Yi was about to respond when Gu Mingxi said lightly, “Pang Pang, Xie Yi’s very busy. Don’t disturb him anymore.”

Xie Yi stared for a moment, and when he came to, he found it very interesting. He pointed at his exaggerated makeup and said to Pang Qian, “I really can’t go out. With all this makeup on, I’ll scare everyone. You and Gu Mingxi go, I’m not going.”

Pang Qian looked very regretful as she waved to Xie Yi. “Then I’ll go first. We’ll come back to find you later.”

Xie Yi smiled brilliantly, “Mm, bye.”



Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi left the convention hall together. Outside was a large corridor, the public restrooms on the side.

Gu Mingxi suddenly stopped in his steps. His teeth were clenched tightly, nearly distorting his facial features. He whispered to Pang Qian, “Pang Pang, you have to help me. I can’t hold it in any longer.”

Pang Qian: ☹️🐔☹️

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 25

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 25 Birthday Present

*Why are you so angry? It's not like I haven't seen it before.*

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Around noon, there were much fewer people around. The convention attendees had mostly gone out to eat lunch, and the staff and other participants were also having lunch and resting. There weren't many people in the corridor, but as for the washroom situation... Pang Qian really didn't know what to do.

She had indeed said before that she could help Gu Mingxi use the washroom. She'd always thought that it wouldn't be a big deal.

But when Gu Mingxi actually asked her for her help, Pang Qian felt a bit hesitant.

She stammered, "C-can't y-you go to the b-bathroom on your own? Last night, and this morning, you went by yourself."

Gu Mingxi's face was completely red from holding in. Sweat dripped down his face. With clenched teeth, "I can't hold it in anymore. If I have to use my feet to take off my pants, it will take too long..."

Pang Qian quickly said, "Why didn't you say so earlier?! I'll go get Xie Yi to help."

She was about to run off when Gu Mingxi called, "Pang Pang!"

Pang Qian turned around and saw Gu Mingxi's pitch black eyes. He said in a quiet voice, "Don't get Xie Yi, okay?"

Pang Qian stood a bit dumbfounded, but Gu Mingxi didn't have the time for zoning out. He'd already walked into the men's washroom. The way he walked was very awkward, and it was obvious that he was reaching his tolerance limit.



Pang Qian stood outside the door for a few seconds, looked around to make sure no one was watching her, and just charged into the restroom.

It wasn't the first time that she'd gone into a male washroom. When they were in elementary school, the girls in Pang Qian's class were very fierce. She wasn't sure whether the boys were really scared of them, or if they just couldn't be bothered with them. In any case, whenever class ended, the girls would go chasing after the boys. Some of the boys got hit too badly, and they would run off into the boys' washroom to hide. The girls would block the entrance and call them cowards. Pang Qian, though, fearlessly ran into the boys' washroom to kick them all out.

Once, she even ran into a teacher urinating. Actually, she hadn't seen anything, but the teacher still dragged her to the teacher's office and gave her a severe lecturing.

The washroom in the convention center was pretty big. There was a row of eight or nine urinals along the wall. Aside from Gu Mingxi, there were also two men inside. One was urinating, the other was washing his hands.

The man washing his hands turned and saw Pang Qian. After staring in confusion for a moment, he looked at the urinals and then reminded her, "Little girl, you've gone into the wrong washroom."

Pang Qian's face went completely red. With an "Mm" sound, she walked back out. She waited for the two men to leave and then ran into the washroom once more. She saw Gu Mingxi standing in front of a urinal, in a bit of a daze.

Pang Qian opened the door to a stall and went inside. She called out quietly, "Gu Mingxi, come in!"

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Gu Mingxi immediately walked inside and Pang Qian locked the stall door. She realized Gu Mingxi was in a difficult position, as he repeated, "Hurry, hurry! I can't hold it in any longer."

"Hey... Be quiet." Pang Qian glared at him, then looked down and helped him pull down his pants.

The stall was pretty small, so it was rather crowded for the two of them. And



they both had a big backpack on, so there was even less space.

Gu Mingxi's pants had an elastic waistband so there wasn't a zipper. Pang Qian lifted the hem of his t-shirt and calmly pulled his pants down to his thighs. Gu Mingxi's dark grey underpants were exposed, wrapped around his...little bird.

At this age, children's bodies started to develop. Pang Qian had learned in physical education class that the process that girls and boys developed was a bit different. Their Adam's apple would develop, they would grow facial hair. She also discovered in junior high that their voices had also changed.

In the summer, everyone wore short sleeved shirts and shorts. Pang Qian would see some boys' legs had grown thick with hair. Of course she couldn't appreciate this kind of "male beauty." Once, she quietly observed Gu Mingxi and Xie Yi's legs. She was glad to find that, although they both had some hair growing on their legs, it was growing in a "gentle" manner.

Pang Qian's body had also gone through great changes. Aside from the developments in her chest, those places that made people feel shameful had also started growing hair, and with time, it grew denser and darker.

Sometimes she would wonder curiously if it was the same for boys. Would they grow hair there? Then she wouldn't be able to stop from recalling seeing Gu Mingxi's body when she was younger. Between his white and delicate legs, there grew a little meaty thing. And then she would also recall that time that she was at Gu Mingxi's house and saw that "inconceivable" video. Although she'd only seen a brief moment of it, but the image was really too shocking. She remembered very clearly that the adult man had something that she couldn't understand at all. It was just like the grilled sausage that the school store sells...

"How do I do this?" Pang Qian stood to Gu Mingxi's right. She looked down at that erect area and asked with a red face, "Do you need the underpants off?"

"No," Gu Mingxi looked down, his face also completely red. He wasn't sure how to direct Pang Qian either, but this wasn't the time to get bashful. He really couldn't hold it in any longer. His body had gone stiff, so he just directly said, "Just pull it down a bit. But turn away and don't look."

"..." Pang Qian turned her head away slightly and boldly pulled at the crotch of Gu Mingxi's underpants. Something popped out and touched Pang Qian's



fingers. It was a bit cool and also had poking hairs... Her heart was beating anxiously, and she tried really hard not to look there. But she couldn't suppress her strong sense of "curiosity," and took advantage, while Gu Mingxi wasn't paying attention, to sneak a glance.

But with that glance, she became petrified.

Gu Mingxi's "little bird" was finally released and he finally felt relief. Although usually when Jian Zhe or Liu Hanlin helped him use the restroom, they would help hold his "little bird," Pang Qian definitely wouldn't do that. Still, Gu Mingxi was very satisfied.

He aligned himself to the toilet on the ground and relaxed his body, and the splashing sound of urination came.

Pang Qian was filled with anxiety. The sound of water falling continued for a long time before stopping. Then Gu Mingxi said, "I'm done."

His voice was thoroughly relaxed, though somewhat uncomfortable. Pang Qian reached out, intending to help him put back his underpants, but then she accidentally touched there— She was very surprised, really very surprised! Because the thing she'd seen earlier had gotten bigger and harder, but after she touched it, it went soft again...

Pang Qian was puzzled by it. She bit her lip, then lifted her head to look at him there. Gu Mingxi naturally saw her line of sight shift, and got very startled. He had no way of stopping her, and could only cry out, "Pang Qian!"

A few footsteps came from outside the stall. Someone stood outside their stall and knocked on the door, "Anything wrong?"

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian both got a scare. They both remained silent. The person outside the stall knocked again, asking, "I'm security. Is everything okay inside?"

Gu Mingxi opened his mouth to respond, "It's fine, I just dropped something."

"You're really okay?"

"Yeah."

"Make sure to watch out. There are a lot of students here, so people let their



guard down.” Then the security guard left.

Outside the stall, the footsteps gradually receded. Inside the stall, the two of them stood up against the walls. But because of their large backpacks, they were still very close together.

Pang Qian could hear Gu Mingxi’s distinct breathing. And in front of her, she could see his Adam’s apple, bobbing up and down as he swallowed. Her heart was pounding, her face burning powerfully. In the silence, Gu Mingxi cleared his throat and said, “Pang Pang, help me pull my pants back up.”

Pang Qian was about to look down when he called out immediately, “Don’t look!”

“...” Pang Qian rolled her eyes, then muttered, “Why are you so angry? It’s not like I haven’t seen it before.”

She did her best not to look down, her face full of calm. She fumbled with and tugged at Gu Mingxi’s underpants and even pulled at the waistband. Then finally, she pulled up his pants.

She turned and looked at the toilet and realized that Gu Mingxi’s aim wasn’t that precise. The floor around the toilet had been splashed with urine. Then she looked at his pants, his beige trousers, and saw that they were a bit wet. He was wearing flipflops, and his feet...were probably also wet.

Pang Qian’s lips twitched. Of course, Gu Mingxi saw her subtle expression. He felt extremely embarrassed, but there was nothing he could do. “I’ll wash my feet later.”

When they took care of everything, Pang Qian opened the stall door a sliver and made sure there was no one in the restroom. Then she and Gu Mingxi both quickly walked out. But when she was helping Gu Mingxi wash his feet, seven or eight young men walked into the washroom. They were originally chatting among themselves lively, but after seeing Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi they quieted down.

Gu Mingxi’s left foot was already cleaned, and his right foot was up on the sink. Pang Qian helped him scrub randomly, and then Gu Mingxi put his leg down. Then in front of that group of guys, he and Pang Qian left the male



washroom.

Behind them came whispering, “Did that kid have no arms?”

“He got a girl to help him use the restroom?”

“What a person!”

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Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian left the convention center and walked on the streets aimlessly. Pang Qian thought that Gu Mingxi was behaving a bit strangely. Since they left the washroom, he hadn't said anything to her. It was clearly written on his face: Unhappy.

Pang Qian felt a bit stuffy inside. She even helped him use the toilet! What wasn't he satisfied about? Was it because she saw his little bird? Oh please! She'd seen it so many times when they were younger. Although the little bird had grown into a big bird now, but... It was basically the same thing!

The afternoon sun was very strong. They were already sweating from it. Pang Qian looked around and decided she wouldn't lower herself to his level. She turned around and asked him, “Want to eat noodles?”

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to see the small noodle shop on the side of the road. He nodded, “Mm.”

When they walked inside, they found that there were quite a few people inside. It was probably because of the comic convention nearby. Pang Qian walked around and fortunately found a table in the corner. It was pretty out of the way, so no one would pay any attention to them.

She sat down with Gu Mingxi and a waiter came by shortly after. Pang Qian flipped through the menu and decided on a bowl of pork bone ramen. Gu Mingxi said, “The same.”

Pang Qian rolled her eyes, “Don't you dislike pork?”

“Then you just pick a better one for me.” He lowered his eyes, not looking at the menu at all. He looked a bit lost, like he'd been hit by some heavy blow.

Pang Qian ordered Gu Mingxi a beef ramen. When the waiter left, she rested her chin on her hands, “Let me try some of your beef noodles later.”



Gu Mingxi dropped his shoulders against his chair, and responded languidly, “Mm.”

Pang Qian looked at him for awhile. Then she balled up her napkin and tossed it at him. He didn’t try to avoid it, so it hit his chin before falling to the ground.

Gu Mingxi finally lifted his head to look at her. Pang Qian asked, “Gu Mingxi, what’s wrong with you? Are you feeling unwell? Why aren’t you saying anything?”

“...”

“You were the one who told me to help you with the restroom,” Pang Qian said. “Th-then, if I help you with that, I’ll definitely see. It’s nothing...”

Gu Mingxi looked at her, then spoke after a moment, “Do you know how long I was waiting for you?”

“Pang Qian’s eyes widened, “?”

“I waited for you for two hours. You didn’t even say where you were going. Don’t you know, it’s really dangerous to be alone.”

Pang Qian retorted, “I wasn’t by myself. I was with Xie Yi.”

Gu Mingxi’s tone became solemn, “But you came with me! Not Xie Yi! If something happened to you, it would have been my responsibility!”

“Why are you being so angry? I-I waited half an hour for you too. But you didn’t come back, so I just walked around with Xie Yi!” Pang Qian explained eagerly. “Before we left, I even looked for you, but I couldn’t find you. Xie Yi said that Tang Weiqing would only be there in the morning, so I wouldn’t be able to see her in the afternoon. And he happened to know her – they’re related or something. So...”

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips and furrowed his brows. Pang Qian’s tone became gentler, “So I just went with him... Sorry, Gu Mingxi. I didn’t know that Xie Yi would take me to see so many artists. They were all awesome. They even drew me pictures, so it took a long time.”

Gu Mingxi turned his head, not saying anything.

He rarely got angry like this. Pang Qian thought it over, and decided she had to



play her trump card.

She pulled out a small box from her bag and opened it for Gu Mingxi to see. It was a light yellow, handmade chain. There were some yellow and white clay beads strung on it. Pang Qian said, “Here, it’s an anklet. I just bought it, and I was going to wait until next month to give it to you for your birthday. I’ll just give it to you now. Gu Mingxi, don’t be angry anymore, okay?”

Seeing the box in her hands, Gu Mingxi’s face flushed slightly. Pang Qian knew that she had a chance. She quickly walked over and sat down next to him. “Lift up your foot.”

Gu Mingxi hesitated, but still lifted up his right foot onto the chair. Pang Qian lowered her head and tied on the chain to his right ankle. She looked at it and asked, “It looks nice. Do you like it?”

“...” Gu Mingxi couldn’t answer. He definitely wouldn’t say that he didn’t like it. But if he said he liked it, that would be such a loss of face. Wasn’t he just in a quarrel with Pang Qian?

Instead, he pulled open the zipper on his backpack, and pulled out the box of postcards. He tossed it onto the table and pushed it towards Pang Qian. He said seriously, “Alright, then I’ll give you what I was going to give you for your birthday next month too.”

Gu Mingxi picked up the postcards and looked at them. “This... Tang Weiqing gave me a box just now, but it was also signed.”

Gu Mingxi vomited blood. (Note: Vomited blood, metaphorically. I think it’s sort of like a mix of ‘I can’t believe it’ and agony.)

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 26

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 26 Summer Night's Evening Breeze

*I have a certificate of disability. They can have another child, and it won't be considered exceeding the birth limit.*

The waiter brought their two bowls of noodles. Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Can you do it on your own?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. He leaned back in his chair and brought his right foot up to the table. Pang Qian put his chopsticks between his toes. He lowered his head, his heel against the table, and grabbed up his noodles to eat.

The tables in the shop were kind of tall. His posture looked a bit strained, but still, it wasn't that big of a problem when he was eating.

Gu Mingxi didn't touch the slices of beef on top of his noodles, waiting for Pang Qian to grab them. But she seemed to have forgotten, as she slurped away deliciously at her own pork bone noodles. Gu Mingxi couldn't stop from reminding her, "Didn't you say you wanted to eat beef?"

After a moment, Pang Qian reacted, "Oh yeah! Let me try it!"

She reached over and without a hint of courtesy, she plucked up a piece of beef and stuffed it into her mouth. After chewing it she sighed, "It costs 2 dollars more than mine, but the beef is really tender. It's really good."

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips, then said, "If you like it, you can have all the beef."

Pang Qian shook her head, "No, the beef is the best part. If I eat it, what will you eat?"

Gu Mingxi said quietly, "I'm fine just drinking the soup and having an egg. I don't really like beef that much."



“Nonsense. Your mom said that you like beef the most!” Pang Qian unveiled his white lie, not leaving him any face. “Next time, I’ll order beef noodles. And you can try the chicken one. It shouldn’t be very spicy.”

Gu Mingxi smiled a little. He lowered his head and ate some noodles and a piece of beef.

Yeah, Pang Qian was right. He really liked it.

When they finished eating, it was still early. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi rested at the shop for a little while, each ordering a cup of cola.

Pang Qian started worrying about their living accommodations that night. She said to Gu Mingxi, “I asked Xie Yi and they’re staying at a nearby guesthouse. I think it was 260 dollars a night. He said if we need to stay there, he can ask his friend to help us reserve a room.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t respond, so Pang Qian continued, “But I didn’t give him an answer yet. I wanted to ask you first. Gu Mingxi, what do you think?”

For some reason, Gu Mingxi felt a bit happy. He asked expectantly, “Why didn’t you agree to it?”

Pang Qian answered very seriously, “Because I think 260 dollars is too expensive.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian pouted and said, “Gu Mingxi, what do you think? Should I call my dad’s friend again and have him help us reserve a place?”

“No, don’t call him. That will leave a bad impression [of us] on him.” Gu Mingxi thought about it carefully, and finally said, “Don’t trouble Xie Yi either. I’ll think of something.”

Pang Qian asked, “What are you going to do?”

“I’m not sure if it will work. Let’s go out and I’ll make a call to try.”

They left the noodle shop and found a public phone near a small shop. Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi dial the number to his house, then she held the the phone up to his ear.



He tilted his head to cradle the phone between his head and shoulders. After a moment, the call went through. Gu Mingxi said, “Mom, it’s me, Mingxi. Is Dad at home?”

Pang Qian listened to his call off to the side. Gu Mingxi’s words were very organized. He explained the situation with just a few words, with a few lies thrown in. He said that Sun Mingfang and Jian Zhe had gone home early.

They exchanged words back and forth, and then Gu Mingxi smiled, an excited look crossing his face. “Thanks, Dad! Then Pang Qian and I will wait at the entrance to the convention center. The address is xxxxx.”

“...”

“Okay. Bye, Dad.”

Pang Qian helped him hang up the phone. After paying, she asked curiously, “Who’s coming?”

“One of my dad’s good friends in Shanghai. My dad said that he’s going to call the man, and then he’ll come help us set up a hotel, somewhere nearby.”

Pang Qian cried out excitedly, “Really?!”

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They waited in front of the convention hall, sitting side by side on the steps leading to the doors, avoiding the sun. Pang Qian fed Gu Mingxi some cola, and then showed him all her plunders from the morning. She talked to him excitedly about the origins of her hand drawn picture.

About half an hour later, a middle-aged man rushed over. He looked around the entrance, his eyes skimming over Gu Mingxi several times, though never stopping on him. Gu Mingxi stared at him a long while, then he stood up and walked over to him. Pang Qian quickly followed him, and heard Gu Mingxi say, “Excuse me, are you Uncle Lin?”

Lin Weibin turned around to see Gu Mingxi, and was extremely surprised. He asked hesitatingly, “You...are Gu Guoxiang’s son?”

Gu Mingxi smiled at him, “Mm, my name is Gu Mingxi. Hello, Uncle Lin.”

Lin Weibin looked over Gu Mingxi. A young boy whose hair was covered in



sweat, his face slightly red from exposure to the sub. Taking a close look at his facial features, he did resemble Gu Guoxiang. His gaze lowered to his shoulders, carrying a large backpack. Next to the wide straps, there hung two empty t-shirt sleeves. When he spoke or made a slight movement, the empty sleeves would swing about.

Lin Weibin couldn't help but ask once more with emphasis, "Are you really Gu Guoxiang's son? Are you his elder or younger son?"

Gu Mingxi stared for a moment, then responded, "My dad only has one son."

Lin Weibin opened his mouth as he wiped away the sweat on his forehead, "Oh, sorry. Although I've known your father for nearly ten years, I've never met your mother or you. You should have contacted me yesterday when you arrived in Shanghai. I would have taken you out for a meal."

Gu Mingxi smiled embarrassed, "Yesterday, we were with our friends. Uncle, sorry to trouble you today. It's your day off and you still have to help us."

Lin Weibin quickly said, "It's not a trouble at all. Aiya, when Engineer Gong comes, he helps us all a lot. I'm very happy that his son has come to visit Shanghai!"

Lin Weibin drove Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian to a nearby 4 star hotel and helped them reserve a standard room. He got their room key and led them up the elevator. He spoke about how he and Gu Guoxiang had met and what they usually did when they met up.

"Every time your dad comes to Shanghai, he'll call me out for a drink. We're really good friends. He's even come to my house for dinner before," Lin Weibin said. "Don't blame me for not recognizing you. When your father talks about you, he talks about how outstanding you are at school, that you test 1st in the grade, that your drawing won an award. How could I have imagined that..."

Pang Qian couldn't stop herself from interjecting, "Gu Mingxi is the 1st in our grade. He always is, after every test."

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips, without a sound. Lin Weibin continued, "That's even more difficult then. Little Gu, how did this happen? Your father never mentioned it to any of us that something happened to you. Was it from the transformer



incident when you were younger?”

“Mm,” Gu Mingxi said quietly. “When I was 6 years old.”

“That was many years ago!”

“Nine years,” Gu Mingxi said with a smile.

Lin Weibin sighed, then asked, “Nine years... Then, are you used to it now?”

“It’s alright. I can take care of myself.” Then shyly, “But of course there are things I can’t do on my own, and I need someone to help.”

Lin Weibin frowned as he looked at him. His eyes had some doubt as he asked, “Then... Do you have a younger sister?”

Gu Mingxi looked at his eyes, and gradually understood his meaning. He considered how to word it, then said, “My parents decided to have another kid, but they haven’t had one yet.”

“Oh, oh,” Lin Weibin said with understanding. “Engineer Gu is 40 years old this year, a year younger than me. He’s still young, still young. He’s so outstanding, of course he should have another child. And having another one isn’t considered exceeding the birth limits, right? With your condition, your parents can still have another child, right?”

Gu Mingxi nodded, then answered calmly, “Right. Since I have a certificate of disability, they can have another child, and it won’t be considered exceeding the birth limit.”

Lin Weibin started talking about the unreasonableness of the Family Planning Policy (one child policy). For example, in his case. Like Gu Guoxiang, he was an employee of a large state-owned enterprise. He’s risen through the rank to get there. If he were to break the policy, he would either be demoted or directly dismissed. And he would even have to pay heavy fines.

Pang Qian was extremely angry listening to this, but since he was Gu Guoxiang’s friend, she knew to hold back her anger, and she didn’t released her anger onto him.

The elevator arrived to their floor, and Lin Weibin swiped the room card to unlock their room door. Pang Qian stared in surprise when she saw the room.



She'd never stayed in a starred hotel before, so she could never expect how luxurious the inside of the room would be.

Lin Weibin spoke quietly to Gu Mingxi for a bit. In the end, Gu Mingxi said that it wasn't early, and mentioned that he and Pang Qian had to return to the comic convention. When Lin Weibin invited them out for dinner, Gu Mingxi declined.

Lin Weibin saw that Gu Mingxi had no arms, so he wondered if the child could even feed himself. By declining his offer for dinner, his suspicion was confirmed. Gu Mingxi was Gu Guoxiang's son after all. Lin Weibin couldn't bear to see him make a spectacle of himself.

He sent the two kids back to the convention center, then left after giving them a few words. After he left, Pang Qian's face fell down. Angrily, she told Gu Mingxi, "The way that man talked was so hateful. Your dad's known him for ten years, why didn't he ever tell him about you? He looked so surprised. It was so annoying."

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walked back into the exhibition area with their afternoon tickets. He said indifferently, "Actually, probably none of my dad's friends know about it."

Pang Qian was very surprised, "Why?"

"Who would bring that sort of things up? My son is disabled, he's missing his arms," Gu Mingxi joked. "Those people wouldn't ever see me. My dad would definitely only talk about praiseworthy things."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, and figured that that really was probably how things were.

Gu Guoxiang never brought Gu Mingxi out to play. When he had business trips in the summer, he was allowed to bring his son along, but he never did.

Pang Qian still wanted to discuss this, but Gu Mingxi advised her, "Our sleeping accommodations are taken care of now, so you don't have to worry about it. Let's just have fun this afternoon."

Pang Qian stared at him. Gu Mingxi was smiling, with bright, shining eyes, as if he hadn't been at all affected by Uncle Lin. So she nodded her head and said, "Okay!"



In the morning, Pang Qian had spent most of the time with Xie Yi. She knew that it made Gu Mingxi upset, so in the afternoon, she only went to greet Xie Yi. Then she spent the rest of her time strolling around, visiting different exhibit halls with Gu Mingxi.

There were many things that Gu Mingxi had already seen in the morning, but he happily walked along with Pang Qian through them again. In the drawing competition area, they were having a 10 minute sketching contest. Pang Qian desperately encouraged Gu Mingxi to participate. Since he couldn't compete with her, he ended up participating in the contest.

The competition area had no chairs, so all the competitors were standing next to tables to draw. Only Gu Mingxi stood very straight, his left leg planted firmly on the ground, his right foot up on the table drawing.

He attracted many people's attentions, but Gu Mingxi was very calm. He lifted his head up to see the excited Pang Qian over on the side, and used her as his model to draw a cartoon girl.

At the end of the competition, Gu Mingxi was awarded 3rd place. He won a hardcover notebook. Pang Qian leaped for joy in happiness.

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Pang Qian brought Gu Mingxi over to the hall where artists were signing things. The artists rotated out to sign for the fans. Pang Qian looked at the long line of people, and then said to Gu Mingxi, "I think that one day, you'll be sitting there to sign things for people."

Gu Mingxi looked at her in surprise. Pang Qian opened her palms, where she held that picture, the picture of her. She said, "Gu Mingxi, look. Your drawing is so amazing. In the future, you'll definitely become really, really famous. The line of people waiting for your autograph will be really, really long, extending all the way to the street outside."

Gu Mingxi smiled and said calmly, "Mm, I'll do my best."

Then they bought a few souvenirs. Gu Mingxi picked out some art supplies. Pang Qian, on the other hand, bought several comics. In the evening, the people in the convention center decreased. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had gotten a bunch of things. They went to say goodbye to Xie Yi and got ready to leave.



They hadn't expected that Xie Yi would have left already. His friends said he left, but they didn't know where he went to.

"Will he show up to tomorrow's competition?" Pang Qian asked.

"The cosplay competition?" The boy shook his head. "Probably not. Xiao Xie has always been kind of childish like that. He goes whenever he feels like it. He's just in it to play for fun. When he doesn't want to play anymore, he just turns around and leaves."

Pang Qian stood there distracted, feeling extremely disappointed.

She and Gu Mingxi returned to their hotel room to rest a bit. When the sky started getting dark, the two of them went out to forage for food.

Gu Mingxi relied on his memory and took Pang Qian to ride the train to the City God Temple. He treated her to the famous Nanxiang *xiaolongbao* (dumplings). Pang Qian ate a lot. Carrying her bulging belly, she took a stroll with Gu Mingxi. They walked to the bund at Renmin Road.

It was their second night in Shanghai, and Pang Qian finally got an sense of what it meant to be an international metropolis. She looked at the spectacular nightscape across the Huangpu River. Being so near to the Oriental Pearl Tower, little Pang Qian felt rather intoxicated.

She'd already forgotten about the fear and anxiety that she felt yesterday, when she first arrived to a foreign land. At that moment, her heart was filled with excitement and pride. She felt like a grown up. Look, she had taken the train. She'd taken the subway. Following their plan, she had gone to the comic convention. She'd also gone to the City God Temple and eaten the famous *xiaolongbao*. Now she was at the legendary bund. Gu Mingxi even said that they would follow the bund all the way to Nanjing Road.

The view outside was really gorgeous. The Huangpu River was flowing calmly, and the ambient lighting around it was like a movie, completely enchanting. And there was also all the contemporary buildings against the skyline. The 14 year old Pang Qian couldn't come up with the words to describe her excitement. She could only look around greedily, and dancingly expressed her thoughts to Gu Mingxi.



The bund was very noisy and crowded. The Shanghai night sky was still grey, but the crescent moon was hanging in the sky. Unsure of when, but Pang Qian had calmed down. Her hands were tucked behind her, her feet stepping around. Occasionally, she would step back and stand next to Gu Mingxi, tilting her head and smiling at him.

A breeze brushed by the air at her ear. She had on a pink t-shirt and white capri pants. She was dressed like any ordinary girl. But Gu Mingxi felt that her eyes were even brighter than the Oriental Pearl across the Huangpu River.

Seeing her bright smile, [a song](#) suddenly floated into his head.

The summer night's evening breeze  
blows at you in my arms  
Your hair inflates  
and swings and twirls around me  
The moon hangs in the sky,  
bound to your feelings  
The breeze that carries your scent  
is the love that I am waiting for  
The love of a summer evening's breeze  
A lonely heart's love  
A love that is still waiting...

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 27

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 27 His Future

*Yi e jie... te... o cuole. What does that mean?!*

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It was already 9 o'clock when Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi returned to the hotel. They were both exhausted. They hadn't rested during the day, and they had been walking around all night. Not caring that she was covered in sweat, Pang Qian kicked off her sandals, and plopped onto the bed, crying out, "I'm dead tired."

Gu Mingxi said, "Take a shower, then sleep."

"You wash first..." Pang Qian rolled around on her bed. "Let me rest first."

Gu Mingxi smiled, "Okay, I'll wash first. You watch some TV."

The washroom in the 4 star hotel was very spacious and clean, so Gu Mingxi washed up comfortably. His legs were very flexible and could reach his head. Sitting down in the bathtub, he was even able to wash his own hair.

After he washed up, he stood in front of the mirror and put on his pants. The water vapor on the mirror was gradually disappearing, and Gu Mingxi saw his body. He turned his body left and right and saw his shoulders. In the places where there should have been arms growing, only vigorous roots remained, along with the hideous scars on the surface of his skin.

Naturally, he felt a bit depressed, because he was different from everyone else. The 15 year old Gu Mingxi lowered his head, his shoulders drawing in, as the water from his hair dripped down. Suddenly, he saw the chain on his right ankle. Before showering, he wanted to take it off, but that helpless fool Pang Qian had tied a knot on it. Gu Mingxi had no way of untying it with his left foot, so he just gave up.



Today, he looked at the light yellow around his foot, the warm color, the warm beads. And the corners of his lips sprang up.

Actually, there was nothing that was that bad. That's what Gu Mingxi thought as he shrugged his shoulders.

With his upper body bare and his "help yourself" (back scratcher) in his mouth, he returned to the room. Pang Qian had already fallen asleep on her bed. Gu Mingxi walked over to her, bent down, and called to her softly. Pang Qian's eyes remained closed, fast asleep. She was even snoring quietly. Gu Mingxi knew that she must have been very tired.

Let her sleep a little, he thought. Then he lifted his leg and pulled up the blanket to cover Pang Qian.

Gu Mingxi didn't turn on the TV. Instead, he brought his bag over to his bed. He pulled all the things out, one by one, and then organized them.

There was a plastic bag carrying his toothbrush, toothpaste, and towel. Another bag was for his dirty clothes. Gu Mingxi sniffed it curiously. It was a very sweaty, sour smell, nearly suffocating him. Thank goodness he still had a pair of clean clothes. Gu Mingxi decided to just wear his shorts to sleep, like he had done the previous night. He figured Pang Qian wouldn't still be afraid of his naked upper body.

He organized the things he bought at the comic convention, brushes, paints, colored pencils, and a set of his favorite illustrator's work. Gu Mingxi sat with his legs crossed, and happily stuffed these things, including the notebook with his convention ticket and drawing award, into his backpack.

Then he saw the small box that carried his anklet, smiled, and put that inside his bag as well. All that remained were a few comic books, all Pang Qian's. The reason they were in his bag was because Gu Mingxi felt the books were heavy. As a boy, he should take care of the girl.

Finally, what was left on the bed was a photograph.

A photo encased in plastic. It was taken at the bund. It was pretty small, the colors weren't very bright, but the image was still pretty clear.

It was a photo of him and Pang Qian. At the time, Pang Qian was carrying



around her point and shoot camera. Gu Mingxi had no way of taking a photo of her, but she felt rather indifferent about it. She told Gu Mingxi that it was already her second roll of film. She had taken a bunch of pictures with the comic artists in the morning.

Later on, Gu Mingxi saw a photography station(?). If they used film to take a photo, they could leave their address and the boss would send it over later. If he used a Polaroid camera, they could get the photo immediately.

Gu Mingxi let the boss take out 30 dollars from his pocket. He had him take a photo of Pang Qian with the Oriental Pearl Tower in the background, and then another photo of the two of them together.

He took one of the photos. In it, he and Pang Qian stood side by side against a railing. The wind was blowing then. His sleeves were carried up by it, and even Pang Qian's loose hair was scattered a bit.

When she smiled, she was rather pretty. Gu Mingxi carefully looked at the photo, and thought that Pang Qian was actually pretty cute. She was just as good as Zhao Jing and Qiu Lina and the like.

She just seemed too young. Whether it was her head or her heart, she was just like a child.

Gu Mingxi carefully put the photo into his bag. He thought, if it was possible, he wanted Pang Qian to grow up slowly.

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At 11 o'clock, Pang Qian woke up, needing to urinate. With difficulty, she pulled herself up from bed and went to shower and wash her hair. After that, not even waiting for her hair to dry, she dropped back onto her bed.

And like that, she slept until 9 o'clock the next morning. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi woke up refreshed and went down to the cafeteria to eat breakfast. When they returned to their room, the phone rang.

It was Lin Weibin calling. He asked Gu Mingxi what time his train left, and Gu Mingxi told him 3 o'clock. Lin Weibin said he wanted to treat him and Pang Qian to lunch, and then he would send them to the train station.

The reason why Lin Weibin initiated such a thing was because he felt he had



forgotten his manners in front of Gu Mingxi the previous day. He couldn't figure out what Gu Guoxiang's attitude towards his son was. What if this son missing his arms was Chief Engineer Gu's precious treasure. Then if he goes home and complains, it will be difficult if they ever need to ask for Gu Guoxiang's help in the future. After consulting with his wife, Lin Weibin came up with this remedy to show his care toward Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi felt he couldn't turn away this invitation. Lin Weibin was Gu Guoxiang's friend. Gu Mingxi couldn't reject him every single time. But... He had originally promised Pang Qian that he'd take her to the Oriental Pearl Tower. Well, it looks like those plans were dashed.

When it was lunch time, Pang Qian's face was as dark as Lord Bao's. Gu Mingxi was making polite conversation with Lin Weibin. Because it was Sunday, Lin Weibin had also brought along his wife and daughter. His daughter was called Lin Xuan. She was in fifth grade, a charming little Shanghai girl. Maybe because this lunch ruined her initial plans for the day, but her dark face was comparable to Pang Qian's.

Some info from Wiki: Lord Bao, named Bao Zheng, was a government officer during the Song Dynsaty. He was extremely honest and upright, and made many changes according to the people's problems. That's not the relevant part though... Supposedly, he was born very dark-skinned and ugly. And in dramas and operas, he's portrayed with a black face and white crescent shaped birthmark on his forehead.

Gu Mingxi used his feet to eat. Lin Xuan twisted her mouth and watched carefully, to see whether his feet were dirty or not. Any dish he picked food from, she wouldn't touch again.

In front of Gu Mingxi was a plate of sweet and sour pork, something all kids liked to eat. It was convenient for him to pick it up, so he ate several pieces. Lin Weibin didn't understand his daughter's thoughts. Seeing that she wasn't eating, he thought it was because she couldn't reach the dish. So he grabbed a piece of pork and placed it onto Lin Xuan's bowl. Lin Xuan put down her chopsticks with a clank. She said, "*Wu qie baole, qie fa luole.*"

Lin Weibin was still for a moment, then spoke in Shanghainese, "*Ganggang*



*kaishi qie, nong na neng hui qie bao?"*

Lin Xuan pursed her lips, and grumbled, *"Yi e jie te o cuole, wu fa yao qiele!"*

Lin Weibin snapped, "Xuan Xuan!"

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stopped. Pang Qian didn't understand Shanghainese, so she just stared at Lin Xuan, not sure what was wrong with her.

Gu Mingxi quietly put down his chopsticks and put his leg down. He said, "Uncle Lin, I'm full. You guys, take your time."

Pang Qian turned to look at him, thought carefully, then also put her chopsticks down. "I'm full too!"

Lunch ended on bad terms. Gu Mingxi didn't even take along the bag of snacks that Lin Weibin prepared for him. He and Pang Qian just got up and left together.

When they were waiting on the train (subway), Pang Qian was filled with indignation. She asked Gu Mingxi, "What did that brat say? You understood, right? Tell me what she said! Did she scold you?"

Pang Qian kept pestering him. She recalled a sentence, *"Yi e jie... te... o cuole.* What does that mean?!"

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, and said lightly, "She said, 'His feet are too dirty, I don't want to eat.'"

I thought it was better to leave the sentences untranslated for effect. But also, I don't know Shanghainese. I just popped the sentences into Google Translate and copied the pinyin. It might not be the most accurate representation, I don't know. The "literal" translation obviously doesn't make sense, since the author's just picking out words that make the same sounds as the word in Shanghainese, but don't make sense in standard Mandarin... It was simple enough though, so I think they just said, "I'm full, I can't eat anymore." "We just started eating, how can you be full?" "His feet are too dirty, I don't want to eat."

With just that sentence, Pang Qian quieted down. She held onto her backpack as she sat next to Gu Mingxi. The two of them looked at the window into the



darkness. They could see their own reflections too.

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The passengers passing by would always look over to Gu Mingxi, whether intentionally or not. Gu Mingxi had his head up the whole time, and he would exchange glances with them calmly. Pang Qian, on the other hand, kept her head lowered, fingers clenching onto her bag.

Just because there are things you don't encounter, it doesn't mean they can't happen.

Just because there are people you've never met, it doesn't mean that they don't exist.

Leaving E City, leaving the Golden Compound, leaving the nearby roads, leaving Thirst for Knowledge Elementary, leaving Origin of Flight... Leaving that lonely, but peaceful, corner in the classroom, leaving that game he couldn't play, but he could stand to the side of the ping pong table and chat... Pang Qian suddenly realized that when Gu Mingxi left all those familiar places, those familiar teachers, classmates, neighbors, relatives... He really did become a very "strange," very "particular," very "eye catching" person.

Although in her eyes, Gu Mingxi wasn't even as strange, particular, or eye catching as Xie Yi, in most people's eyes, he was different to them. Completely different.

With this understanding, Pang Qian felt very sad. She didn't know if the situation would get better as time passed and they grew older. She didn't know what his future would be like. In the past, she didn't think it was necessary to think about that. After all, he was just too amazing! But now, she didn't dare to think about it. Really, she didn't dare at all.

While they were waiting for the train [back to E City] in Shanghai, Pang Qian suddenly said to Gu Mingxi, "Gu Mingxi, I still think that it's better if you don't go to First High."

"Why?" Gu Mingxi asked.

"First High isn't good enough. You should go to Vast Voyage." Pang Qian gave him her detailed analysis, "Last time, when your mom came to talk to my mom,



she asked my mom some things about finance. She said that she kind of wanted you to work on finance in the future. Something like cost accounting, where you don't have to run back and forth to the bank, and can just sit in an office every day. And you like math and science, so you'll definitely be able to learn it well. But... If you want to do something in finance, you have to go to a good school and choose a good program. And it would be best if you went to graduate school too. It will give you a competitive edge."

Pang Qian rarely spoke in such a serious manner. She carefully tried to recall the words she'd overheard between Li Han and Jin Ai'hua that day. "If you go to First High, your chances of getting into a famous university will be lowered. If you go to Vast Voyage though... Who knows, with your results, you might just be able to go straight into a good university. And when you graduate, you'll be able to find a stable job in finance. My mom said not to think too much about the fact that there are a lot of females in financial work. Actually, the ones doing the good finance jobs are all men."

Gu Mingxi watched her mouth open and close, going on and on. Finally, he asked, "Then are you going to go to First High with Xie Yi?"

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 28

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 1. I'm Thinking of You Again 28 Young and Innocent

*I'm talking about me, Stupid!*

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On the train back to E City, Pang Qian slept against Gu Mingxi's shoulder. Gu Mingxi didn't feel like sleeping at all. He kept his head turned toward the window.

The train traveled through the city and then through the countryside. The high rises in front of his eyes turned into patches of fields. Gu Mingxi watched the regressing scenery, and he felt a bit perplexed.

Li Han had never mentioned the things that Pang Qian had told him about. Gu Mingxi always tested 1st in the grade, so Li Han would rarely ask about how his studies were going. There was still a year before the high school entrance exams, and she had never asked him what high school he planned to go to.

But Gu Mingxi had once overheard his parents talking. He hid in the kitchen and heard Gu Guoxiang tell Li Han, "We don't need to think about what school Gu Mingxi can test into. We have to consider which school will accept him."

In the past years, Gu Mingxi had spent a lot of effort studying. The characters he wrote with his foot were very beautiful. He even wrote English really well, his letters ending with a beautiful little tail. Using his foot, he made clean and precise geometric shapes with his triangle ruler and protractor. All his math papers could be used as a model for the correct answers. His memory and comprehension ability were outstanding. Even in elective classes, he performed well and was never insincere about learning for them. And with the help of his classmates, he was even able to do experiments with his feet.

Gu Mingxi's life was simple and pure, and would probably be considered rather



boring. He spent most of his time studying, and in his remaining free time, he drew and painted. The rest of his time was usually spent on something related to Pang Qian.

Watching the TV series that she recommended, listening to her favorite music, reading the comics that she liked. Thank goodness there was a Pang Qian to make Gu Mingxi's life more rich and colorful.

It was true that he hadn't thought about what the future would hold. After all, he still hadn't graduated from junior high yet. Three years of high school, four years of university, or even longer. How could the current Gu Mingxi be thinking of his future profession?

But Li Han had already thought about it. She wanted him to work in finance. Gu Mingxi didn't know anything about that line of work. He knew that Jin Ai'hua was a treasurer. She always sat at a desk, calculating with an abacus. Gu Mingxi felt a bit stuffy. If he had to use his feet to calculate with an abacus, it would be very, very slow.

He didn't want to work in finance at all.

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When Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got home, it was already 7:30. After the past three days and two nights, the two kids had gotten tanner, and they looked a bit unkempt. Pang Qian was really hungry. When she got home, she started calling out about eating dinner. When Gu Mingxi got home, and with his father's help, he took a dump.

The night before, he'd felt a bit of a need to go, but it wasn't very strong. So he just held it back, for an entire night and another day.

After his amputation, this had become a sort of specialty of his. Unless he had diarrhea, Gu Mingxi could hold it for two or three days without issue.

After Pang Qian finished eating the fried rice Pang Shuisheng made for her, she sat at the table eating grapes. Jin Ai'hua was fanning herself as she sat down next to Pang Qian. She asked her daughter, "Qian Qian, tell me the truth. How many of you went to Shanghai to play?"

Pang Qian spit out a piece of grape skin, and she replied guiltily, "I told you



already. There were four of us.”

“There were really four?”

“Really.”

Jin Ai’hua put Pang Qian’s camera onto the table. “When I go develop these pictures, if there aren’t four people in them, you figure out what you’re going to do.”

Pang Qian panicked. She hadn’t expected Jin Ai’hua to have this trick. Pitifully, she said, “Mom, at the start, they said they would go...”

Jin Ai’hua was angry to death, her hand reaching out to pull on Pang Qian’s ear. “You crazy girl! Do you want to die?! If your Uncle Gu didn’t tell me, I wouldn’t know that you and Gu Mingxi were by yourselves in Shanghai! When did you learn to lie?! Ah?! Aren’t you ashamed?!”

Pang Qian cried out in pain, “It hurts, it hurts! Mom! Of course I’m ashamed!”

Jin Ai’hua was furious as she shouted at the back of her head. “Still won’t admit your mistake! Gu Mingxi is a boy! You’re a girl! Can the two of you go out together? And overnight too! And in the same room! Your Auntie Li said that when Gu Mingxi goes out, he can’t use the washroom by himself! Did you know?!”

Pang Qian hid her head in her arms, “I know!”

Jin Ai’hua paled from shock, “You know?! You know and you still went out with him?! Answer me this. When you were in Shanghai, did you ever have to help Gu Mingxi use the restroom?”

Pang Qian refused to respond. Jin Ai’hua exploded, “I’m asking you a question!”

Pang Shuisheng was attracted to the commotion in the living room. He walked over slowly and said, “Qian Qian just got home, and she just finished eating. Why are you scolding her again?”

Jin Ai’hua hit the table and said, “You ask your precious daughter! Gu Mingxi is already a 15 year old boy! When the two of them go out, how can Gu Mingxi use the toilet!”



Pang Shuisheng looked towards Pang Qian uncertainly. Pang Qian hesitated before she said, “Gu Mingxi can use the bathroom on his own! I only helped him...once...a little.”

Her voice grew quieter, because she realized her parents were glaring at her with wide eyes.

Pang Qian finished with her final struggle, “It’s nothing. Really, it just once. When we were younger, didn’t I always bathe with Gu Mingxi? We always touched here and there...”

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Li Han was putting away the clothes, and then said to Gu Guoxiang, “What’s going on next door? Didn’t Qian Qian just get home? Why is Ai’hua already hitting her? Qian Qian’s crying is really loud.”

Gu Guoxiang ignored her. He was leaning against the bed, engrossed in his book.

Li Hun folded all the clothes and put them into the cabinet. Then she went to shower and came back into the bedroom wearing a camisole nightgown.

She laid down next to Gu Guoxiang. After aimlessly shifting around a bit, she asked a bit shyly, “Guoxiang, today...is my that day.”

Gu Guoxiang didn’t even lift his eyes from his book as he asked, “What day?”

“When I’m ovulating.” Li Han lowered her eyes and moved closer to Gu Guoxiang. “It’s been a long time since we’ve done it. Let’s try today, okay?”

Gu Guoxiang was silent for a moment. Then he put down his book, took off his glasses, and pinched the bridge of his nose. He said, “Ah Han, I’m really tired today.”

Li Han was disappointed. After all, the ovulation period was only one or two days a month. If they missed this month’s, they would have to wait another month. But she wouldn’t go against Gu Guoxiang.

Li Han said, “Mm,” and then turned off the TV. She left the bed and got a cup of milk. “I’m going to sleep first. When you’re tired, drink this milk, and then go to sleep.”



She laid down on the bed sideways, her back facing Gu Guoxiang. After awhile, she heard the sound of him drinking the milk. Then he turned off the lights and also laid down on the bed.

Gu Guoxiang wrapped his arms around Li Han, from behind her. Li Han didn't make a sound. She understood Gu Guoxiang too well, she knew that there was something he wanted to say to her.

Indeed, after a bit of silence, Gu Guoxiang started speaking. "Do you remember I told you about Lin Weibin before? My friend in Shanghai. I've known him for ten years."

"I remember," Li Han said.

"He called me today, and he was apologizing nonstop."

"Why?"

"Yesterday, I asked him to help Mingxi and Qian Qian arrange a place to stay. This afternoon, he took his wife and daughter out, and invited Mingxi and Qian Qian to lunch. There was a bit of trouble when they were eating, and everyone ended up unhappy."

Gu Guoxiang's tone was very even, and Li Han wasn't sure what he was getting at. She asked, "What happened?"

"Lin Weibin said that his daughter, she's 11, was a bit startled by our Mingxi. She's young and doesn't understand things, so she said some excessive things."

Li Han, "..."

"Ah Han, I have a lot of friends in Shanghai. Every time I go there for a business trip, they always arrange to go out to eat. They call me Chief Engineer Gu. They send me cigarettes, alcohol, and someone's even given me money before. When we're eating, everyone always talks about their kids. Someone asked me before, 'Chief Engineer Gu, how old is your kid?' 'Son or daughter?' So I said I had a son, he was in junior high. They asked when I would bring my son along to Shanghai. After all, E City isn't very far away. I could only say that my son was busy with school, so he didn't have time. I said my son was always first in the grade. During school breaks, he studied painting. Then they'd say, 'First in the grade? Then your son will definitely be very talented in the future.'"



Li Han, "..."

"Now that Lin Weibin knows about Gu Mingxi's situation, it won't be long before all my friends in Shanghai know. What will they say then? Will they think I was bluffing? Gu Guoxiang's son doesn't even have arms, but he draws? And he's first in his grade?"

When he said that, Gu Guoxiang chuckled quietly. "Ah Han ah... I often think about if the baby inside you had stayed back then, they would be 4 or 5 months old now, right?"

There were already tears streaming from Li Han's eyes, but she clenched her teeth tightly, so as not to make a sound. Gu Guoxiang let out a sigh, then loosened his hold. He said, "Alright, goodnight."

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School started again in September, and Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian started their third year of junior high. Even if Origin of Flight wasn't an amazing school, the students in the fast class still started to become nervous and tense.

At the end of the year, it would be the turn of the century. On December 31st, Pang Shuisheng took his wife and daughter to his parents' house for dinner. When they returned home, there were sounds of firecrackers and fireworks all around.

Pang Qian didn't like to release fireworks. She was a bit scared of fire, and she particularly hated the smell of gunfire after a firework was set off.

With fireworks sounding off loudly outside the house, Pang Qian carried a box of chocolates over to Gu Mingxi's house and knocked on their door.

She politely greeted Gu Guoxiang and Li Han with New Year's greetings. Then she walked into Gu Mingxi's room.

He was doing his homework. Pang Qian really admired [that?]. After she pushed a chocolate piece into his mouth, she sat down on the edge of his bed, swinging her legs back and forth.

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, a slight smile on his face. Beaming, Pang Qian asked him, "Does it taste good? My little uncle brought it back from his trip abroad."



“It’s pretty good.” Gu Mingxi stood up, then sat down next to her on the bed. “Is there something you needed?”

Pang Qian glared at him angrily, “I can’t come over unless I need something?!”

“Really fierce... That’s not what I meant. Didn’t you go out to eat dinner?” Gu Mingxi asked. “I thought there was something, so you came to look for me.”

Pang Qian grumbled, “There’s nothing. I just came over to play. Hey, do you have any new comics?”

“Yeah, I secretly bought a few editions of Kindaichi.” Gu Mingxi sat down at the chair in front of his desk. He bent over, and reached his leg into his desk drawers. Eventually, he pulled out a comic book. He repeated this until he’d taken out four books.”

Pang Qian was extremely happy. “Why do you hide them like me? Hey... It’s all dusty.”

“What else can I do? If my mom finds out about it, she’ll definitely confiscate them.” Gu Mingxi returned to Pang Qian’s side. Pang Qian opened two pieces of chocolate. She ate one, and she fed the other to Gu Mingxi. She flipped through the comic and said, “I haven’t read this one yet. Let me borrow it.”

“Okay, but don’t lose it.”

“When have I ever lose one?”

“You’ve lost four of my comics! One book of Rurouni Kenshin, two books of Yu Yu Hakusho, and one book of Hunter x Hunter!”

Pang Qian looked at him doubtfully, “I lost them?”

“Of course!” Gu Mingxi was eating his chocolate as he said, “No matter what, I can’t find them!”

“So petty. I’ve lent you my comics to read too. And I’m even giving you chocolates!” Pang Qian curled her lips, “Gu Mingxi, you’re really so petty. After today, it’s a new year. You’re still counting our debts. What’s the big deal. I can buy them and replace them for you.”

“...” When faced with her brazenness, Gu Mingxi could only ever glare at her.



After awhile, Pang Qian had already kicked off her slippers and was lying on Gu Mingxi's bed. She ate chocolates as she flipped through the comic. Her legs were raised behind her, continuously swinging back and forth.

Gu Mingxi sat next to her, watching her. He suddenly thought of something and said, "Pang Pang, do you know? The new living quarters west of the city completed construction."

"Eh?" Pang Qian was very interested in this. In an instant, she sat up. "Really?"

"Mm," Gu Mingxi nodded slightly, both his feet also on the bed. With his chin on his knees, he said, "My dad said it, so it's definitely true. They're at the final stages of setting up the houses. They'll probably start assigning them in July. And if it's quick, we should be able to move in at the end of the year."

"Wah! That means, if I get into First High, then I can move into a new house after just half a year? And it has an elevator?"

Seeing her so happy, Gu Mingxi also felt happy. Even his eyes smiled, as he said, "Yeah, just half a year."

"That's awesome!" Pang Qian lied back down on Gu Mingxi's bed and wrapped her arms around one of his pillows. "I wonder if we'll be able to be neighbors."

Gu Mingxi shrugged his shoulders. "Living in the same community is already really good. If we really want to be neighbors, then my dad will just have to think of something."

"Awesome!" Pang Qian was elated. Her school performance was very stable. Her chances of getting into Vast Voyage or Ninth High weren't that good, but as long as she keeps up her work, getting into First High shouldn't be a problem."

Gu Mingxi bit his lip, then continued, "Pang Pang, if we're still going to live in the same place, I think it's better if I go to First High."

Pang Qian was still for a moment, and then sat up.

Gu Mingxi watched her, not evading her gaze. He said, "A few days ago, my mom brought me to Vast Voyage. The recruiting teacher there saw my records, but the people there told me not to choose Vast Voyage."

Pang Qian, "..."



“The same thing with Ninth High. I went there too, but they didn’t want me either.” Gu Mingxi smiled a little. “I told my mom that I wanted to test for First High. Since you’re testing for First High, my mom promised to take me there to see the teachers and ask about it later.”

Pang Qian asked anxiously, “What if First High doesn’t agree to it either?”

“Then there’s nothing I can do.” Gu Mingxi lowered his eyes and looked to the sides, at his empty, flattened sleeves. “But I figure there has to be at least one school that will take me, right? I’m not going to bring them a mountain of trouble or anything.”

Pang Qian nodded numbly, unsure of how to comfort Gu Mingxi. After thinking for a long time, she said, “Gu Mingxi, good luck. When you go to visit the teacher at First High, tell them that you have a very close friend that will also go there. The school can arrange for the two of you to be in the same class, as deskmates. Your friend can help you with your daily activities, and no one else has to be inconvenienced.”

Gu Mingxi stared at her, his lips twitching. He asked uncertainly, “You’re not... talking about Xie Yi, right?”

“Are you crazy? How could I ask Xie Yi to help you?!” Pang Qian reached out to pinch his waist. Then she pat her own chest, “I’m talking about me, Stupid!”

Although her pinch had been pretty painful, Gu Mingxi was smiling happily.

And so, the two of them happily agreed on which high school they would test for.

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Maybe he was just fortunate, but when the recruiting teacher at First High saw Gu Mingxi’s transcript, and even had a live demonstration of him using his foot to write, turn pages of a book, taking off his jacket, etc., they expressed their willingness to accept him. So, when it was time for students to fill out which school they would apply to, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both wrote in E City’s First High. Pang Qian wasn’t particularly concerned over where Xie Yi chose. Whether he picked Vast Voyage, Ninth High, or Second, Third, Fifth High, Pang Qian still wouldn’t change her decision.



But when she found out that Xie Yi had also picked E City's First High, she still felt rather happy.

The high school entrance exam was held in June 2000. At the end of June, the results were released. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both performed very well. Especially Gu Mingxi. Not only did he score first in Origin of Flight, he was also first in the whole school district.

At the start of July, the admissions for each school were posted. Pang Qian was successfully admitted to First High. After calling to find out, she ran over next door. She was holding onto Gu Mingxi's exam card as she helped make the call for him.

Gu Mingxi was dumbfounded, unsure if he should laugh or cry. "My test scores were better than yours. You got in, how could I not get in?"

"Be quiet." Pang Qian listened carefully to the phone. Finally, she smiled, "Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi! We both got into First High!"

Gu Mingxi was also very happy. He said, "We should go out to celebrate. I'll treat you to McDonald's!"

"I can't worry about eating yet!" Pang Qian cried out cheerfully. "I have to go ask my dad. I got into a good high school, so he should keep his promise! Ah, ah, Gu Mingxi, I'm so happy! At the end of the year, we'll be neighbors again in a new house!"

Gu Mingxi nodded. "When your dad gives you the good news, I'll treat you to a meal then!"

But Pang Qian's good news never came. During this summer break, Pang Qian disappeared without a trace for three days.

Gu Mingxi went over and knocked on the door to Apt. 501. Jin Ai'hua opened the door for him. She said, "Mingxi, we have some family problems. Pang Qian can't go out to play for now. In a few days, I'll let her go over to find you."

Gu Mingxi was very worried about Pang Qian, but hearing Jin Ai'hua say this, what could he do. He could only go home, slightly angry. He asked Li Han, and though she seemed to know something, she wouldn't say anything.



The next time Gu Mingxi saw Pang Qian, it was already a week after the admission announcements.

Pang Qian went over to his house, his parents were both at work. Pang Qian sat in a daze in front of Gu Mingxi for a long time. And Gu Mingxi didn't press for any answers, just sitting with her quietly. Finally, Pang Qian said, "Gu Mingxi, can you go somewhere with me?"

They walked a very long way, and they asked a lot of people for directions, before they finally found the public bus they wanted.

There wasn't air conditioning on the bus, so it was really stuffy, like they were inside of a can. Gu Mingxi was sweating like rain. Pang Qian sat beside him, staring off blankly like a blockhead.

The scenery outside changed from a bustling city to a desolate wilderness. There were even a few farm fields. Gu Mingxi looked out the window startingly. The bus doors swung open a few more times before they reached the terminal. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got off the bus. It was a shocking scene, a wide, open emptiness.

The sun in the sky shined brightly, baking the earth below. Gu Mingxi's lips were so dry that they were nearly peeling. He narrowed his eyes and looked around. Then he turned to the side, rubbing his chin on his shoulder to wipe off the sweat. He turned to look at Pang Qian, "Let's find someone to ask directions. I've never been there either."

Pang Qian nodded. The two kids walked for about 10 minutes before they saw a man dressed like a construction worker. Gu Mingxi asked for directions, glad that they hadn't gone the wrong way.

They followed the direction that the man pointed in, and finally found their destination. It was under construction, a large, open factory. And to the side of the factory, there were blocks of completed, tall buildings. The walls were beige, and the windowsills were brown. It had a very textured look. The clear view of the apartments under the sun looked just like the advertisements had shown. The shining glass dazzled Pang Qian's eyes.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian stood at the bottom of the buildings and looked up. After awhile, Pang Qian suddenly burst into tears.



Gu Mingxi didn't know what to do, and continued to comfort and coax her. He asked her what was wrong, why she was feeling upset. Pang Qian didn't answer, and only cried louder.

She cried for a full 10 minutes, before she gradually quieted. She wiped away her tears with the backs of her hands. She turned to look at Gu Mingxi. His body and face were soaked with sweat, his eyes full of anxiety and worry. Seeing Pang Qian calm down, he finally said, "Pang Pang, don't cry. What happened? Tell me."

"Gu Mingxi, "Pang Qian sobbed and sniffled as she looked at him. Her eyes were swollen, like two peaches. "Did your dad tell you that after the move to the new factory, there will be restructuring?"

"Restructuring?" Gu Mingxi shook his head. "I don't know."

"I never heard my dad mention it either. They kept it from me for a long time." As Pang Qian spoke, she started to cry again, her tears like loose beads falling down. "Gu Mingxi, my dad's been laid off. He was laid off a bunch of months ago. He and my mom hid it from me because they thought it would affect my high school entrance exam. Now that the test is done, they finally told me. So..."

Gu Mingxi's eyes grew gloomier and gloomier, as she said, "So, Gu Mingxi, we can't be neighbors anymore."

[End of Part 1]

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 29

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 29 Words Between Father & Son

*Dad, it's already been ten years.*

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The area northwest of the city was called City West. It was the city's newly developed industrial park. All the large factories that were originally located within the city had been moved there in succession.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian stood at the empty roadside, waiting for the bus. There was only a bus sign to mark the bus stop, not even a shed to block the sun. Pang Qian kept turning back to look into the distance. There weren't a lot of high-rises in the area, so the metal company's new 20 plus story residential buildings was very eye-catching.

Pang Qian looked at the beige colored buildings under the sun. Those houses really looked pretty. And they had elevators. Gu Mingxi said that inside, the houses were all very large. When they were standing at the bottom of those buildings, they could see the park across the fences. There was even a stream in the park, and there were stones to create a mountainous feel. There were also lots of different trees. It was clear that the metals company had spent a lot of money to build the residential area.

But all of it already had nothing to do with Pang Qian.

Pang Qian didn't understand how the company could be so ruthless though. It had the money to put up a new luxurious residential building, but it didn't have any money to give to her dad?

From the TV and the newspaper, Pang Qian knew what it meant to get laid off. Her dad, Pang Shuisheng, entered the metals company when he was 18 years old. He worked there for 25 years, and originally, he thought he'd be like the



other employees of a state-run enterprise. They would work until they were 60 and be set for a stable retirement. But since he was a specialist welder, he would have even been able to retire at 55 years old.

But now, he was only 43 years old. Because of all the years he worked welding, he had even gotten an occupational disease. He didn't have education or any other experience. After losing this iron rice bowl (secure job), Pang Qian didn't know what her dad would do in the future.

The rickety bus pulled up to the stop. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi got onto the bus. She insisted on sitting in the back row, so Gu Mingxi could only silently follow her.

The car slowly headed towards the heart of the city. Pang Qian sat at the window, looking out at the bleak street. She couldn't help but worry for Gu Mingxi, as she asked, "This place is so far away from the city. Gu Mingxi, how are you going to get to school in the future?"

It was also the first time that Gu Mingxi had gone there, but his sense of direction was much better than Pang Qian's. He understood clearly that the new house was really very far away from downtown E City. In between the two places, there was even a stretch of countryside.

He definitely couldn't ride his bike such a great distance. It was too dangerous. Gu Mingxi thought about it, "I have to take the bus."

"Take the bus by yourself?" Pang Qian furrowed her brows at him. "You have to transfer buses. And the bus is always very crowded in the mornings. Will you be okay?"

"What else am I supposed to do?" Gu Mingxi asked, staring at her.

Pang Qian thought for a moment, but she couldn't come up with any ideas.

Gu Mingxi asked, "About your dad and work, has something been worked out? Did he go talk to my dad?"

"I don't know," Pang Qian answered glumly. "My dad's already been out of work for two months. I go to school in the day, so I didn't realize. After the midterms, when I would stay at home, my dad would pretend to head to work every day. I don't know where he ran off to on such hot days. If I hadn't gone to



ask him about the new house, he and my mom probably wouldn't have told me about it."

Gu Mingxi said, "From what you've said, it hasn't been that long. I don't know if the formalities have all been taken care of yet. How about this, when I get home, I'll ask my dad if there's any way to repair this."

Pang Qian looked at him, pleasantly surprised. "Really? Will your dad help?"

"My dad and your dad have been good friends for a long time." Gu Mingxi said with assurance, "My dad's position at work is pretty high up. He should be able to help with this."

Pang Qian was extremely happy, her heart able to hope again. She said, "Gu Mingxi, you're really great! You're really too great!"

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That evening, Gu Mingxi stood outside Gu Guoxiang's study. He lifted up his foot and knocked twice on the door.

Gu Guoxiang, "Come in."

Gu Mingxi pushed open the door with his shoulder, and then walked inside. Gu Guoxiang was sitting behind his desk, a computer in front of him. He'd found someone to build that computer six months ago, and it had cost more than ten thousand dollars.

Gu Guoxiang didn't even look at Gu Mingxi, his fingers typing away busily on the keyboard. Gu Mingxi walked over to his side, and saw the article he was working on, packed densely with words.

He asked, "Dad, did you type all this?"

Gu Guoxiang flipped the page of the book beside him, and without looking up said, "Yes, I typed it all."

"That's amazing."

Hearing Gu Mingxi's genuine praise, Gu Guoxiang looked up and asked, "What are you looking for me for?"

"Mm." Gu Mingxi stood beside Gu Guoxiang meekly, just like a very obedient student standing in front of a tough teacher. He asked, "Dad, am I bothering



you?”

“No.” Gu Guoxiang took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. He said, “I’m also a little tired of doing this.”

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, “It’s like this, Dad. Today, Pang Qian told me that Uncle Pang has been laid off. Pang Qian looks very upset, so I wanted to ask you if there was any room for change with Uncle Pang’s case.”

Hearing his son’s words, Gu Guoxiang was shocked, so much that he forgot to put his glasses back on. After a moment of surprise, he smiled and asked Gu Mingxi, “Did Pang Shuisheng tell you to ask me, or was it Pang Qian?”

Gu Mingxi was looked at him and shook his head, “They didn’t ask me to. I was the one who thought of it.”

Gu Guoxiang looked at him coldly, and said, “You think that I have a bit of a position at the factory now, so it’s easy to reinstate your Uncle Pang?”

“That’s not it...” Gu Mingxi realized that his father was a bit angry, but he wasn’t about to give up like that. So he continued, “I just think that Uncle Pang is really amazing. Wasn’t he awarded “advanced worker” many years? He was the one who helped weld together my bike too. It’s still in great condition...”

“What is it that you want to say?” Gu Guoxiang put on his glasses, and got up to get a folding chair from the corner. He unfolded it and put it down, “Mingxi, sit down.”

Gu Mingxi sat down a bit apprehensively. Gu Guoxiang took a sip of tea from his cup on the desk. Then he said, “I haven’t had a [heart to heart] talk with you in a long time. And in the blink of an eye, you’ve already grown this big.”

He touched Gu Mingxi’s shoulder. Through the cloth, he gently felt those rounded shoulders. Under his palm, he felt the truncated bones and then the flesh that grew under it. From his little boy frame, he had grown up.

Gu Mingxi said, “Dad, what I’m saying is that there definitely isn’t a problem with Uncle Gu’s abilities. Why would he get laid off? You...”

He looked hesitatingly at Gu Guoxiang, then gathered his courage to say, “You’ve been good friends with Uncle Pang for so many years, from elementary



school until now. Pang Qian's helped me with a lot of things too. Now that Uncle Pang's facing this kind of thing, if you can, won't you help him. Dad."

Gu Guoxiang listened quietly to Gu Mingxi. Occasionally, he would take a sip of tea. He smiled gently, then shook his head. "Mingxi, you really are still a child."

Gu Mingxi was nearly 16 years old. He was already 176 cm tall. Of course, he wouldn't be happy that his father was taking him to be a child. But this wasn't something for him to retort on. He could only bite his lip and sit obediently, touching his toes together out of habit.

Gu Guoxiang said, "I know that Pang Qian is very special to you. And perhaps something will develop between you two in the future. But Gu Mingxi, you have to know, this society we live in is very cruel and realistic. There are some things that you can't just look at from the surface. Look at the situation next door. Pang Shuisheng indeed had no problems with his work, but what about Auntie Ai'hua? Your Auntie Ai'hua graduated from junior high, and now she's working as a treasurer. She's 42 this year. The factory gave her a computer and told her to learn how to use it to do her accounts. But she couldn't learn it, no matter what. The factory is going through restructuring, and they are laying off a lot of people. Your Auntie Ai'hua is one of the first ones who will have to bear this. The factory can hire college graduates to take care of treasury matters, someone who can use a computer, who can speak English, who has a high working efficiency. When I found out about this, I went to talk to your Uncle Pang. We decided to leave Auntie Ai'hua at the company, to transfer her to a warehouse job. After another 7 or 8 years, she can retire. In order to avoid criticisms, we could only let your Uncle Pang go. But your Uncle Pang is skilled. He can find another job, and it might even pay better."

Gu Mingxi was astonished. Gu Guoxiang finished his cup of tea. He smiled and said, "What? Didn't expect it? I knew that Qian Qian would tell you about it. Two little kids, what do you know. Mingxi, ah—"

He pat his son's shoulders again, and let out a long sigh. "You're really too naive. Actually, you should be a little more selfish. You said that Pang Qian's helped you a lot over the years? Why don't you think about who made you lose your arms in the first place? Why don't you think that, without your help over the years, Pang Qian wouldn't be getting such good grades? That she wouldn't



be able to get into a good high school?”

Gu Guoxiang’s voice was full of disdain. Gu Mingxi was shocked again, frozen in place. It had been many years since anyone in their family had mentioned the incident when he got injured. But now, hearing Gu Guoxiang bring it up, Gu Mingxi finally learned that his father who’d been faraway in France at the time, had been living with an uneasy heart.

“Dad, it really wasn’t Pang Qian’s fault.” Gu Mingxi looked at Gu Guoxiang’s eyes. “She was only 5 years old at the time. It was just an accident.”

Gu Guoxiang looked at his son uncertainly. “Mingxi, I’ve always wondered about this. Do you really not have Pang Qian at all?”

“Why would I hate her.” Gu Mingxi spoke quietly and slowly. “Back then, Zhu Huiqiang’s frisbee flew onto the transformer. We didn’t understand back then, so we had to climb up to get it back. If I didn’t go, it might have been Zhu Huiqiang, or Dong Dong, or Xiao Jian. It might have even been Pang Qian. No matter who went to get it, something was bound to happen. I only lost two arms, so that was considered my good luck. If someone else had gone, maybe they would have lost their life.”

Gu Guoxiang was incredulous towards Gu Mingxi’s explanation. “You still think that you were lucky?”

“Dad, it’s already been ten years.” Gu Mingxi looked at Gu Guoxiang as he spoke, “Right now, I don’t think that life is particularly difficult without arms. What you use your hands to do, I can also do with my feet.”

“Then have you thought about what will happen with going to university or getting a job? Do you know how cruel the world is out there? It’s survival of the fittest, and it all depends on your abilities! Graduating university doesn’t guarantee that you’ll get a job. You have to count on your own skill. Even if I can arrange a job for you, it won’t be a charity case. You’ll have to work for it, you’ll have to create something of that value. When I’m still working, maybe my words will hold some weight. But what about after I retire? There’s only ten or so years left!”

Gu Guoxiang stared at his son. He said earnestly, “Mingxi, you’re only 16 years old. If you live until you’re 70, you still have more than 50 years to get through.



In 50 years, neither your mom or I will be here. What are you going to do?"

Gu Mingxi responded casually, "I'll go live in a nursing home."

"Ha!" Gu Guoxiang couldn't believe it. "That's what you have to say?"

...

When Gu Mingxi was leaving the study, he looked again at Gu Guoxiang's computer. Recalling what his father had told him about Jin Ai'hua, he asked his father, "Dad, can you teach me to use a computer?"

"Doesn't your school have a computer class?" Gu Guoxiang said, "I've seen your class schedule. From the start of junior high, there's a class every week."

Gu Mingxi bit his lip, then said honestly, "Dad, actually... I've never gone to computer class. The teacher said I didn't have arms so I wouldn't be able to use the computer. So I just stayed in the classroom to self study."

Gu Guoxiang was silent for awhile. Then he asked, "You don't even know how to turn on a computer?"

"Mm," Gu Mingxi nodded, embarrassed. "I've never touched a computer before."

"..." Gu Guoxiang nodded. "Okay, I know. I'll think about how you can use a computer."

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Gu Mingxi couldn't tell Pang Qian about the "truths" his father told him. It was just too cruel. She was already having a hard time understanding Pang Shuisheng's situation. If she knew her unlucky father was laid off because of Jin Ai'hua's bad situation, how would she be able to face her parents?

Just as all parents want their children to be outstanding, all kids also hope that their parents are strong, exceptional, able to do anything, able to protect them.

Gu Mingxi didn't want to destroy the image of Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua in Pang Qian's mind. When she asked him about it, he could only say, "I'm sorry, Pang Pang. My dad really can't help with it."

Pang Qian was usually rather irascible in front of Gu Mingxi, but when faced with real business, she wasn't one to become troublesome. She didn't get angry



at Gu Mingxi because of this situation. She just shrugged her shoulders and said, “I knew it. There’s no hope for this case anymore.”

At the start of August, Gu Guoxiang received the keys to their new house. He borrowed a car, intending to take his son and wife to see the new house. It was Sunday, and it happened to be Gu Mingxi’s 16th lunar birthday. He hesitatingly asked his dad if they could invite Pang Qian along.

Gu Guoxiang said, “As long as she wants to.”

Gu Mingxi immediately went next door and asked Pang Qian if she wanted to see the new house.

At the start, Pang Qian really didn’t want to go. Think about how hurtful it was. She was supposed to have a share of it, but now she could only look at it. She wasn’t going to suffer that kind of grief! But Gu Mingxi kept calling her. Pang Qian was so irritated, “You guys are going to look at your new house. What’s it got to do with me?!”

Gu Mingxi was startled and couldn’t come up with a response. After a long while, he finally came up with a reason, “I want you to be the first person to see my room!”

“What’s there to look at in your room?!”

“Oh... Our house is 120 sqm, so there should be four rooms. My mom said that aside from the master bedroom, I could pick whichever of the remaining three rooms. You can help me pick.”

“Show off! Show off!” Pang Qian was angry. She threw a pillow at Gu Mingxi. “Gu Mingxi, you’re so annoying!”

The two kids were in the middle of their fight when Pang Shuisheng, who’d just returned from having a drink, came in. He said to Pang Qian, “Today is Mingxi’s birthday. The birthday boy came to invite you out, and you’re still being so haughty? You’re going to start growing bugs if you keep staying at home. Hurry and go out to play with Mingxi.”

Pang Qian spoke without concern [for others], “You also stay home all the time, growing bugs!”



Pang Shuisheng was startled, then he hit the back of Pang Qian’s head with a *pa*. “You have no respect for your elders! Have you grown up, so you don’t listen to your parents anymore?! Hurry and change your clothes, Mingxi’s waiting for you!”

Pang Qian cried out, “Dad!”

Pang Shuisheng suddenly let out a strange chuckle. He said, “Daughter, listen to your dad. Go take a look at Mingxi’s house. Who knows, it might be yours too in the future.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 30

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 30 Seventh of the Seventh

*Let's go. Gu Mingxi, I'll treat you to barbecue!*

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When Pang Qian was getting in the car, she was still unwilling. But when she got off the car, she was like a completely different person. She followed Gu Mingxi into the new community, full of curiosity. The houses had just been assigned, so a lot of people had come to check out their homes. There were a lot of familiar faces from the factory. When they saw Gu Guoxiang, they were very courteous and gave a greeting.

Gu Mingxi's new house was on the 16th floor. Gu Guoxiang opened the door to their new house. Because the windows weren't closed, there was a blast of wind blowing out at them. Pang Qian opened her eyes wide, looking around at this 120 sqm house. Although it was just the rough grey walls, she could still tell that this was a very big house.

Gu Guoxiang and Li Han started to make a careful inspection of the house. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian weren't interested in any particulars. They just ran around, back and forth between the rooms.

The master bedroom had a terrace connected to it. The living room also a balcony outside. There were three other bedrooms. One of them was slightly smaller, but the other two were about the same size. One faced south and one faced north.

Pang Qian stood in the south-facing room and said to Gu Mingxi, "Of course you should pick this room to be yours. Look at how bright it is!" She sprawled out next to the window and looked down, her hair blown into a mess by the strong wind up at the 16th story. She said, "And you can see the park when you look down. You can only see the street from the other room. Ay, Gu Mingxi,



listen to me. Pick this room!”

Gu Mingxi had been looking at her, smiling. He stood next to Pang Qian, and he was looking around this foreign room, his eyes glowing brightly. Pang Qian ran to the middle of the room, and then spun around in a circle. She gestured with her arms, “Your bed can go here. And the bedside table here. This spot is for the dresser, and here for the bookcase. Your desk can go by the window. When you’re doing your homework, you can take a look at the scenery outside!”

When she finished, she was full of envy. “It’s such a big room. It’s bigger than my parents’ room. And it’s on the 16th floor!”

Pang Qian really was a girl who was easy to make happy. She’d already forgotten about all the troubles with her parents and their work. Although she felt a bit bad seeing him move to a new house, a big house, she was still happy for him.

Who’d have expected that after Gu Guoxiang and Li Han took a look around, they’d bring Gu Mingxi to the north-facing room. Gu Guoxiang seized Gu Mingxi’s shoulders and said, “Mingxi, this will be your room in the future.”

Pang Qian was about to interrupt, when Gu Mingxi silenced her with his eyes. He nodded, “Okay.”

Pang Qian stuffed her words back down, but she felt a bit angry for Gu Mingxi. His parents didn’t even ask about his opinions, and they just made the decision for him. What’s with that?!

They finished looking around and headed down, when Pang Qian asked Li Han, “Auntie, will that room on the side be Uncle’s study?”

“No,” Li Han answered. “The study will be the west-facing room.”

“Then what about the south-facing room?”

Li Han smiled and said, “It’s a spare room.”

Pang Qian didn’t understand why, if they had a spare room, they didn’t let Gu Mingxi have it.

On the way back to the city, Gu Mingxi said to Pang Qian, “Pang Pang, today’s my birthday. My (paternal) grandparents are going out to have dinner with my



parents and me. You should come with us.”

“Ah?” Pang Qian was caught by surprise. She looked at the back of Gu Guoxiang and Li Han’s heads. When the two of them didn’t give any opinions, Pang Qian said, “Nah, it’s okay. You’re eating with your family. I’m not going.”

Gu Mingxi said, “It’s just my grandparents and my aunt. You’ve met them all before.”

Pang Qian was unsure. Li Han turned around and said, “Qian Qian, come along. Next year, when we don’t live in the Golden Compound anymore, we won’t have as many chances to get together. It might be hard to spend another birthday together.”

This saddened Pang Qian. Gu Mingxi looked at her with bright eyes. He nudged her leg with his left foot, “Come along, okay?”

Pang Qian finally nodded, “Mm.”

Gu Guoxiang had reserved a room in a restaurant downtown. That evening, Gu Mingxi’s grandparents and little aunt arrived. Gu Guoxiang’s younger sister was called Gu Guoying. Her son, Dong Yuan, was a year younger than Gu Mingxi. He also graduated from junior high this year.

Dong Yuan had okay grades. During the high school entrance exams, he didn’t get into the (“general”) school he tried out for. And he wasn’t willing to go to a technical school. Gu Guoying pleaded with Gu Guoxiang to help out. With some connections, Dong Yuan was accepted to a good school outside the city. After paying the [out of district] fees, he was getting ready to start school.

Pang Qian had met Dong Yuan before. When they were younger, the three of them had played together a few times. Pang Qian’s impression was that Dong Yuan and Gu Mingxi weren’t very close. In fact, they were like people from two different worlds. Dong Yuan was a kid who had been spoiled rotten, and he was rather full of himself (alt. opinionated). But his kind of opinionated was different from Xie Yi’s sense of independence. Pang Qian even thought that he was a bit crazy.

When Pang Qian saw Dong Yuan again, she was surprised. He’d actually gotten that much fatter! That stomach, those arms, those legs! His body was nearly



double the size of Gu Mingxi.

After everyone arrived, Gu Guoxiang called over a waiter to order. He politely handed the menu to his parents. Both of them said they couldn't see and handed the menu over to Gu Guoying. Dong Yuan rudely grabbed the menu and said, "Let me see!"

Then he started to order. He looked at the pictures on the menu and ignored the cold dishes, hot dishes, and soups. He wanted to eat the things he liked, so he pointed to five pork dishes: honeyed pork ribs, pork trotters in soy sauce, Cantonese-style barbecue pork, battered pork ribs, and pork with vegetables.

Gu Guoying said, "That's enough. Let your grandparents see."

Dong Yuan was unhappy, "I'm not done."

The two elders smiled, "It's alright. Let Yuan Yuan order. The boy's growing, he should eat meat."

Pang Qian was dumbfounded. She happened to be sitting next to Dong Yuan, so she suggested quietly, "Order a sauteed beef with peppers."

Dong Yuan said loudly, "What's so good about that? You want something spicy? Then I'll get chicken with chilies."

Pang Qian, "..."

Under the table, Gu Mingxi nudged her with his leg. She turned to look at him, and Gu Mingxi just shook his head slightly and smiled.

Dong Yuan flipped through the menu for awhile, before handing it back to Gu Guoxiang with an unsatisfied look. Gu Guoxiang quietly added a few more vegetable dishes and a fish, and then let the waiter go.

When the food came out, Pang Qian learned about Dong Yuan's appetite. He ate a piece of battered pork ribs in two or three bites. And then he ate three pieces in a row. He said that the pork trotters were tasty, so Grandpa Gu just put the whole plate in front of him, so that Dong Yuan could eat it on his own. When the shrimp came out, Dong Yuan had a few pieces and said that it would be too troublesome, before immediately brushing half of the serving plate onto his own bowl. That kind of sweeping gesture nearly made the watching Pang Qian go



crazy.

Only Gu Mingxi ate very little.

The table in the restaurant was rather tall, so it wasn't convenient for him to eat. To add on to that, there were a lot of people. Out of politeness, Li Han had pulled over another chair next to Gu Mingxi, and she would help him put food into a small bowl there.

Because of this, Gu Mingxi ended up with his back facing Pang Qian. She would occasionally turn to the side to look at him, her heart upset for him. He was the birthday boy, this was his 16th birthday party. But he wasn't even eating at the table. He could only lower his head, hunched over, and grab at the little amount of food on the chair in front of him.

During the entire dinner, it was only Gu Guoying's family talking. She was saying that it was almost time for school to start, that Dong Yuan still needed to buy this and that. After hearing this, Grandpa Gu said to Gu Guoxiang, "Since Gu Mingxi's also starting high school soon, and he'll need a new backpack and new notebooks, why don't you also buy those things for Yuan Yuan too."

Li Han lowered her head, not letting out a sound. Gu Guoxiang nodded, "I understand, I'll make sure Li Han buys them."

Dong Yuan called out, "Uncle, I also want a new computer!"

At that time, computers weren't cheap. Gu Guoxiang said lightly, "Mingxi doesn't have a computer either."

Dong Yuan said, "Even if Mingxi had a computer, he wouldn't be able to use it!"

Gu Guoxiang glared at Dong Yuan across the table, his eyes gradually turning dark. Dong Yuan was probably a bit scared, as he twitched his mouth and lowered his head, settling down.

But Grandpa Gu said, "Yuan Yuan's right. Mingxi really can't use a computer, but Yuan Yuan can use one. Guoxiang, just buy one for him."

Gu Guoxiang didn't respond, but Li Han couldn't stay silent any longer. "Dad, a computer costs ten thousand dollars (1500 USD)."



Grandpa Gu didn't know the value of a computer, but after hearing this, he was very startled. But he couldn't take back the words he'd already said. That would mean losing too much face. He couldn't say it to anyone else, so he said directly to Li Han, "What's ten thousand dollars? All of your doctors visits these years have cost how many tens of thousands! Guoxiang is the one earning it anyway."

With regards to Gu Mingxi's family affairs, Pang Qian wasn't very familiar with it. She didn't know what kind of sickness Li Han had gotten. But Gu Guoying quickly gave her the answer, "Sister-in-law, you're still seeing the doctor? What did the doctor say? Speaking of, I have an old classmate that works at E City's Third Hospital. Third's infertility department is very famous. Should I ask her to help connect you with an expert?"

Li Han's face went red and white. Then the waiter approached, and Gu Guoxiang said quietly, "Let's not talk about this. Eat."

During the whole thing, Gu Mingxi didn't turn around once. Pang Qian was actually pretty close to him. Sometimes, she wanted to get closer, and so she'd secretly reach out her right hand to his back.

She put her finger against his backbone. Since he was bent over, his back was taut, so Pang Qian could very clearly feel his bones and muscles.

Naturally, Gu Mingxi could feel that, but he never turned back, as if the talk around the table had nothing to do with him.

When they were done eating, Li Han brought a cake over to the table, and Gu Mingxi finally stood up. Li Han lit birthday candles for him, and was about to turn out the light in the room when Grandpa Gu said, "Don't do all that stuff. Just blow out the candles."

Li Han stood in place helplessly, looking at Gu Guoxiang. Gu Guoxiang looked at her and then said, "Forget it. We won't sing a birthday song."

Pang Qian watched on, incredulous. Gu Mingxi didn't say anything. And in the end, no one even said "Happy birthday" to him. He just stood there, then bent over slightly and blew out the candles.

Gu Guoying started cutting the cake, and then she gave the first slice to her



son, Dong Yuan. Grandpa Gu said, “Yuan Yuan, eat a lot. Your aunt and uncle bought a cake that was too big, we’ll definitely not be able to finish it. Yuan Yuan, take it home later. You can have it for breakfast tomorrow.”

Pang Qian twitched her lips, looking at Dong Yuan. She was already too tired to say anything to him.

Gu Guoxiang was standing, and he rubbed Gu Mingxi’s head. He said, “Our Mingxi is 16 years old now, he’s a young man.”

It was then that Gu Mingxi smiled a bit. He even turned to give Pang Qian a glance.

Pang Qian just got her piece of cake and ate a bite of it. She felt that this cake was the worst tasting take she’d had in her life.

After dinner, everyone left. Gu Guoxiang drove Li Han, Gu Mingxi, and Pang Qian back to the Golden Compound, and then had to go return the car. After he left, Li Han pushed the kids towards the building. Pang Qian suddenly pulled at the hem of Gu Mingxi’s shirt, causing him to look back at her, a pair of eyes in the night looking very bright.

Pang Qian said, “I’m too full, Gu Mingxi. Take a walk with me?”

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It was summer, so the air was hot and humid. Even if there was a breeze, it hardly cooled you down.

But in Pang Qian’s opinion, walking along the street and sweating with Gu Mingxi was much more refreshing than their meal in that luxurious hotel.

“So Dong Yuan turned out like that. He looks just like a pig.” Pang Qian was always very outspoken in front of Gu Mingxi. “Do you know, I counted how many pieces of ribs he ate. There were 12 pieces of honey pork ribs, and he ate 7 of them! There were ten pieces of battered pork, and he had 5 pieces! And that pork trotter, the piece was this big! It was so oily! He ate it all, on his own! That really scared me!”

Gu Mingxi couldn’t help but smile. “Were you really that bored, that you counted how much food he ate? Then, how much did you eat?”



“Not that much, of course. I didn’t even eat until I was full,” Pang Qian said with a pout. “Who told you to ignore me? You sat there on your own, eating by yourself, and you didn’t even turn around to talk to me. Of course I was bored to death.”

Gu Mingxi halted in his steps, looked at her a moment, and said seriously, “Are you really still hungry?”

Pang Qian smiled, then pointed her finger at him, “Hey, you didn’t eat until you were full either, right?”

Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi’s appetite wasn’t small.

Gu Mingxi’s face reddened and he turned his face away. Pang Qian kept up next to him, laughing and scratching at him as she said, “Birthday boy, are you kidding? It’s your own birthday, and you didn’t even eat until you were full!”

Gu Mingxi couldn’t hide from her paws, and finally said, “Alright, stop it. I’m still hungry. What do you want to eat, I’ll treat.”

Pang Qian looked over his shirt and pants, teasing, “Did you bring any money?”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian laughed, and pulled two 10 dollar bills out of her pocket. She waved them in front of Gu Mingxi’s face, “Dadadang! I brought money! Let’s go. Gu Mingxi, I’ll treat you to barbecue!”

They sat at a small table next to the outdoor barbecue stall. Pang Qian ordered two cups of cola, 4 dollars. Ten sticks of lamb skewers, 10 dollars. Two bowls of stir fried noodles, 6 dollars. They used up all the money, but she was in a good mood, face filled with a smile.

The boss brought out the food and put it on their table. Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi pull apart his wooden chopsticks. Gu Mingxi lifted his right leg up on the table, waiting for her to put the chopsticks between his toes. Then Pang Qian suddenly called out, “Wait!”

Gu Mingxi stared at her, his eyes wide open. Pang Qian laughed and said, “I’m going to sing you a birthday song first!”

She clapped her hands as she sang, and she was singing very loudly. The



customers around them had their eyes on the two of them. Gu Mingxi's face was burning. When Pang Qian finally finished singing the song, he finally let out a breath.

Pang Qian wasn't done yet though. She picked up her glass of cola and lightly hit her cup to his, and a crisp "ding" rang in the air. She laughed and said, "Gu Mingxi, happy birthday!"

It was really hot outside. Her nose glistened with beads of sweat, and her bangs were stuck to her forehead. But in Gu Mingxi's eyes, this Pang Qian was pretty cute.

They started taking big bites of their noodles, and it was delicious. Out of convenience, Pang Qian even fed Gu Mingxi the lamb skewers. He didn't mind and just took a bite of the lamb from her hand.

While they were eating, the stall boss came over and put down a plate with two grilled sausages. Pang Qian stared for a moment, then said, "Boss, we didn't order this."

The boss laughed and said, "Today's Qixi, and it's this student's birthday. My treat."

From my other translation: The Qixi Festival, sometimes called the Double Seventh Festival or Chinese Valentine's Day, occurs on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month. It celebrates the annual meeting of the cowherd and weaving girl, two lovers who were separated by a galaxy, only able to meet once a year. (Also, recall Mingxi's name and the Qixi Festival from Ch.2)

Gu Mingxi was a bit embarrassed, but Pang Qian cheered, "Thanks, Boss!"

Her mood got even better. After she and Gu Mingxi ate their sausages, the two of them walked home with full bellies.

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Pang Qian couldn't refrain from asking Gu Mingxi about Li Han. He said, "After my mom's miscarriage last time, the doctor said that it would be harder for her to get pregnant again. For the past two years, she's been taking medicine to recuperate."

Pang Qian asked, "Your mom's already 40 years old. She still wants another



baby?”

“Mm,” Gu Mingxi nodded. He kept looking at his toes as he walked. “Not only do my parents want one, my (paternal) grandparents want it too. They always say that you raise a kid so that they can take care of you when you get older. Even a daughter is fine. But someone like me, not only might I not be able to take care of them, but I might even become more of a burden.”

“Nonsense! That’s not true!” Pang Qi got angry.

Gu Mingxi looked at her comically, “Why are you so agitated? I’m only telling you what they said. It’s not as if that’s what I think.”

Pang Qian felt depressed inside, unsure of what to say.

Gu Mingxi lifted his head up to look at the sky. They were standing at the gate to the compound. It was a very open area, and there weren’t many lights, so the stars in the sky could almost be made out.

Seeing Gu Mingxi staring at the sky, Pang Qian also looked up. After staring for a long time, she asked, “What are you looking at?”

“The Milky Way,” Gu Mingxi said. “Can you see it?”

Pang Qian: =△=

Gu Mingxi looked at her with disdain. “You can’t even make out our galaxy?!”

Pang Qian cried out, “I’m nearsighted, okay?!”

“Stop lying, you’re not nearsighted.” Gu Mingxi felt a bit helpless. He couldn’t reach out and point to it out to her in the sky. He could only say, “Do you see the brightest star there?”

“Oh...” Pang Qian took a careful look around the sky, then pointed. Unsure, she asked, “That one?”

“Mm,” Gu Mingxi smiled. “That’s the weaving girl (Vega).”

Pang Qian blinked a few times. Then she asked, “Which one’s the cowherd (Altair)?”

“On the other side of the galaxy. It’s a little dimmer... Do you see it?”

“No.” Pang Qian said impatiently, “I don’t even see the galaxy!”



“It’s that thing that looks like a group of clouds. We’re in the city, so it’s really not obvious to see.” Gu Mingxi shook his head. “You even read Saint Seiya: Knights of the Zodiac and Constellation Palace Myth...”

Pang Qian smacked him a few times on the back. “So what! What’s that got to do with anything?”

After she finished hitting him, she didn’t pull her hand back. Instead, she rested her hand on his shoulder, looking up at the sky with him.

Later on, her other hand joined the first, lightly resting on him. She relaxed, her two arms resting on his body, around his neck.

Gu Mingxi’s body stiffened as he realized the girl’s soft body was stuck to his. Her arms were sticky with sweat, emanating warmth, stuck to the bare skin near his shoulders. It wasn’t actually very comfortable.

He could even feel her breathing, the clean sound of air moving near his ear. It even carried a slight scent of cumin from the lamb skewers they ate. The weight of her body pressed against his body without restraint. Gu Mingxi’s heart was beating extremely fast, his face growing hot. Although he was a bit reluctant to let her go, he also felt that if she continued holding on, he’d make a fool of himself.

Gu Mingxi twisted his body, feigning anger, “Let go! Aren’t you hot?!”

Pang Qian hummed a few lines, then said coyly, “So stingy. Just let me stay here awhile, I ate too much.”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 31

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 31 Year 1 Class 2

*I think that I am an ostrich.*

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“Goodnight, Gu Mingxi.”

Pang Qian laughed as she leaned against the door to Apt. 501. From the crack, her head came out and she waved at Gu Mingxi.

“Goodnight,” Gu Mingxi said. Pang Qian closed her door, and then Gu Mingxi lifted his foot to knock on his own house door. Li Han came to open the door for him.

After walking into his house, the first thing he did was head to the kitchen to drink water. He was pretty thirsty. He didn’t use a straw, or grab onto the cup with his foot. He just bent over and bit the cup, upturning it, and gulping down the water.

This method naturally meant that some of the water would drip down. It streamed down his chin and neck, onto his clothes. Li Han complained, “You got your clothes wet.”

Gu Mingxi bent over to put the cup back down. He turned his head to wipe the water on his mouth onto his shirt. “It’s okay, I’m going to take a shower right now.”

Li Han stood at the entrance to the kitchen, “Son, I’ll make you a bowl of dumplings. You hardly ate anything at dinner.”

Mothers really know (their children) best. Gu Mingxi felt all warm inside, as he smiled and said, “It’s okay, Mom. Pang Qian and I ate, stir fried noodles and lamb skewers.”



Li Han was silent a moment, then muttered, “Don’t eat at these street vendors in the future. It’s not clean.”

Gu Mingxi laughed, “I’m going to shower.”

“Do you want me to help scrub your back?”

“No, thanks.”

After Gu Mingxi finished washing up, he walked out and back to his room, in only his underpants. When he entered, he was startled to see Li Han sitting on the edge of his bed. “Mom!”

Li Han looked up at him, eyes all red. Realizing how peculiar she seemed, Gu Mingxi couldn’t be bothered with putting his clothes on. He sat down next to her and asked, “Mom, what’s wrong?”

Li Han didn’t answer him, but she replied, “Son, were you very unhappy today?”

That was pretty much a rhetorical question. Of course Gu Mingxi would be a bit unhappy, but he didn’t take any of it to heart. And especially after eating with Pang Qian, he didn’t really care anymore.

He was very close to his mom, so he just told her the truth. “When we were having dinner, I was a bit [upset], but not anymore. Mom, it’s not like you don’t know. Grandpa, Grandma, and Aunt have always been like this.”

Li Han looked at her son’s bare body. Her son really grew up. His height and his body were already becoming like an adult’s. But no matter how you looked at it, his cut off shoulders were very glaring.

She touched her hand to his shoulder. Gu Mingxi didn’t move away, but he frowned. “Mom...”

“Sometimes I’ll have a dream,” Li Han said. “In my dream, you still have your arms. You’re just like all the other kids, very healthy...”

“Mom—” Gu Mingxi dragged out this word, cutting off Li Han. Moving her shoulder from her hand, “Please, stop saying these things, okay?”

Li Han wiped at her eyes. “Mingxi, I’ve been thinking a lot recently. If I have another baby, what’s going to happen to you? What will your dad leave for you



in the future? If I can't have another baby, then what happens with the two of us? Your grandpa wants another grandchild, and he's already older than 70. Your father is very filial, so he wants to have another child. But I'm already 42 years old..."

Her words became incoherent, gradually drowned out by her tears. She'd never said these types of things to Gu Mingxi before. She didn't know who she should talk to about it. Her marriage was already on thin ice.

Li Han and Gu Guoxiang got together of their own volition. When Gu Guoxiang pursued her, he was timid but persistent. At that time, he was a top student who had just entered the factory. He was handsome and ambitious. And she was the factory flower (prettiest girl), chased after by all the young men. She was gentle and graceful.

At the start, Grandpa Gu didn't agree to their marriage, because Li Han was from a different province. He wanted Gu Guoxiang to find a girl from their own area. They would have a better understanding of her, and it would be more convenient during New Year's celebrations.

Gu Guoxiang and Li Han didn't succumb to the pressures at home, and they finally ended up together. They even had a cute little Gu Mingxi...

Now, Li Han no longer had her pure and beautiful face from back then, although her figure hadn't changed that much. But the wrinkles on her face were obviously present, and there were some spots around her eyes too. She'd worked too hard for so many years, and she'd been a bit depressed the past few years as well. She nearly didn't recognize the image she saw in the mirror anymore.

Gu Mingxi sat quietly beside Li Han, unsure of how to comfort her. He really wanted to embrace his mother, so he leaned over against her body.

His head rested on his mother's shoulder. A long while later, Li Han finally raised her arms and embraced him tightly.

She choked out, "Son, why do you have such unfortunate luck."

Gu Mingxi had many things he wanted to say. But in the end, he could only say, "Mom, it's not that my luck is bad. I will succeed."



Li Han left Gu Mingxi's room. He lied on his bed, in a daze.

Actually, there was something he didn't understand. Why did everyone doubt him, why did they think that he had no future? He was only lacking two arms. It made his life a bit inconvenient, but he never despaired about it.

He couldn't dance, but he could sing. He couldn't play piano, but he could draw. He couldn't play ball, but he could run. In the future, he wouldn't be able to be a doctor, a policeman, a teacher, a driver, a chef... He could be a lawyer, an artist, a radio DJ, a stock market trader... He could even work in finance like his mother said.

Gu Mingxi also wanted to learn how to use a computer. He didn't have hands, but he had feet. He'd seen his dad using the computer before, and he was sure that he'd be able to learn how.

He wasn't the only person in this world without arms. There were even people who were blind, deaf, lame, or even quadriplegic... They were living well, and some were even successful in their line of work. Gu Mingxi pressed his chin against himself, looking at his crippled shoulders of ten years. Undoubtedly, his body would leave some people surprised, even scared. And the way he did things might make some people uncomfortable, but for Gu Mingxi, that didn't mean much.

Maybe it was because his arms were amputated when he was young. Maybe it was because he was just 16 years old now. In any case, the feelings he had towards his relatives' longstanding doubts and contempt for him... Rather than feeling wronged, angry, aggrieved, or resigned, he felt an unwillingness to give in (or give up).

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On the first day of high school, Gu Guoxiang drove Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian to school.

Gu Guoxiang had bought a car, a black (Volkswagen) Santana. Pang Qian felt that he was really amazing. The things most parked at the Golden Compound were bikes and motorbikes. The number of personal cars could be counted on one hand.

When they arrived to the school gates, Gu Guoxiang didn't leave the car.



Instead, Li Han brought the kids inside. Li Han had previously met the recruitment teacher at First High, but she hadn't met Gu Mingxi's head teacher. Taking advantage of this chance, she decided she had to accompany the kids inside so she could see the teacher.

Fortunately, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian were both in Class 2. Pang Qian looked over the class roster posted on the wall. She didn't see Xie Yi's name, which left her a bit disappointed.

She was looking over the roster for other classes, when Gu Mingxi walked up to her, "Pang Pang, let's go."

Pang Qian reluctantly followed him up the stairs. She went into their classroom, but Gu Mingxi followed Li Han to the teacher's office to meet his head teacher.

First Year, Class 2's classroom was on the fourth floor. There were already several students in the room. Pang Qian had looked over the class roster, and other than Gu Mingxi, she didn't know anyone. She walked into the classroom with her backpack on, and with a glance around, she saw that in the last row, next to the window, there was that special desk.

Pang Shuisheng had found someone to custom build that desk. He'd already done it three times now. When Gu Mingxi got taller, the desk had to be remade to suit him. Whenever Pang Shuisheng saw Gu Mingxi, he'd always pat his shoulders and say in a loud voice, "Kid, lift your head up, chest out, back straight! You're always bent over when you're writing. Be careful you don't become a hunchback."

On this point, Pang Qian was always grateful to her father. She walked over to the combined high and low desk, naturally sitting down at the higher half.

Her action caused a bit of commotion in the room. The two boys sitting in front of her turned around. One of them had his hair shaved short and flat. He seemed very sturdy, the kind of person Pang Qian would describe as "masculine." His forehead was also sporting a bit of acne. He stared at Pang Qian for a moment, then hesitatingly asked, "Classmate, why are you sitting there?"

"Why can't I sit here?" Pang Qian asked curiously.



“I heard...” He mysteriously lowered his voice, “There’s a disabled boy in our class. I heard he doesn’t have arms. And he’s sitting there.”

He pointed his finger toward the lower half of the desk. Pang Qian’s eyes casually followed his finger. She said, “That’s right, there’s a boy without arms. I’m his deskmate.”

“Deskmate?” the other boy asked uncertainly. He wore glasses and had tanned skin. He didn’t look too bad. He asked Pang Qian, “You know him?”

“Mm.” Pang Qian observed them carefully, and saw that the two boys didn’t have any ill intentions. They were simply curious. Her tone became a bit more friendly, as she explained, “I was in the same class as him since elementary school, and we were deskmates for six years. He went to the teacher’s office, and he’ll be here soon.”

The two boys nodded, then laughed. The flat haired boy smiled and said, “I’m Zhou Nanzhong. What’s your name?”

“Pang Qian. Pang as in *pangda* (enormous), Qian as in *qiannü youhun* (A Chinese Ghost Story, story/film).”

“Xiao Qian!” The boy with glasses laughed out loud. “I’m Wang Song.”

Gu Mingxi carried his backpack and entered the classroom. With a glance around, he saw Pang Qian sitting next to his seat. It had already been two years since they were deskmates. Thinking of her returning to his side again made Gu Mingxi quite delighted.

And then he saw Pang Qian chatting with the boys in front of her. They had turned around, and one of them was resting his arm on Pang Qian’s desk. The three of them were full of smiles, chatting very happily.

“Mingxi.”

When Li Han called him, Gu Mingxi turned around. Li Han helped him neaten his shirt collar and then pulled at his sleeves to ease up his shirt. She said, “Teacher Dai will arrange for a male student to help you use the restroom in the future. It will all be voluntary, and if they’re not happy about it, don’t force it. I’m sure that with more than 20 male students in your class, there will be a few like Jian Zhe or Liu Hanlin, who’d be happy to help.”



Gu Mingxi nodded, "I know, Mom."

"And Qian Qian will be able to help you with everything else, so I can rest assured. When you have lunch or milk, when you need to carry books and change classrooms, Qian Qian will help you."

"I know."

"Don't fight with other kids at school. If someone bullies you, just tell the teacher and tell me when you get home. Don't get confrontational with them. You won't be able to beat them in a fight."

Gu Mingxi didn't know what to say. "Mom, I'm not a little kid. Who's going to bully me..."

"You never know. There are some kids who are just bad. Zhang Jiaqi from the compound is two years older than you, and even in junior high, he was still causing trouble." Li Han knocked Gu Mingxi on the head. "When school is over, be sure to take the bus home with Qian Qian. It will be safer. Ah... But what will we do later."

Gu Mingxi couldn't stand it anymore. "Mom, you're nagging a lot. Hurry and go back, Dad's still waiting for you. I have to go in too."

Li Han rambled off a few more words before she left the school.

Gu Mingxi took a deep breath outside the classroom, and then walked inside from the back door. The room quieted in an instant. Gu Mingxi lifted his head up, chest out, doing his best to ignore the strange stares. He only looked at Pang Qian, walking over to her, a step at a time.

He shook his shoulders and dropped his backpack to his desk. He sat down at his desk, and took off the flip flops on his feet. With his feet on the desk, he reached inside his backpack.

Sometimes Pang Qian would lend him a hand, and he didn't reject her help. Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song turned around, looking at Gu Mingxi with calm and friendly gazes. Gu Mingxi smiled at them and said, "I'm Gu Mingxi. What are your names?"



After discussing together, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian decided it would be best to take the bus to and from school.

Biking from the Golden Compound to First High took more than half an hour, and they would have to cross two bridges. Gu Mingxi riding downhill was really dangerous. Pang Qian felt that they couldn't put on Gu Mingxi's life on the line like that.

During the first week of school, they had military training. Gu Mingxi had never participated in elementary school and junior high. When he brought up participating this time, his head teacher, Teacher Dai considered and then agreed.

I don't really know what's up with the military training. Seems like it's something students do for a week or two in their first year of high school and university (and I guess for junior high, etc.). I read that it's sort of to build patriotism and the like, and less about actually being trained to join the military.

Early in the morning, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked out the door. The two of them wore camouflage uniforms, carrying a flask of water and a lunch box, as they walked to the bus stop. According to the adults' instructions, they took the 31 bus.

There were a lot of people on the bus, and Pang Qian was nearly squished flat. She kept pushing Gu Mingxi inside, and when they got to the middle of the bus, they finally found a comfortable spot. The two of them stood very close to each other.

"Is it going to be like this every day in the future?" Pang Qian wiped the sweat from her forehead, and then saw that Gu Mingxi's face was also covered in sweat. She pulled out a bag of napkins from her pocket, and then helped him wipe his face.

Gu Mingxi looked a bit uncomfortable. Pang Qian ignored the odd looks from those around them. She lifted her head to look at the map in the bus, and counted that they'd need to take the bus for nine stops.

"This is the worst." Pang Qian thought about spending three years doing this and became cold. "Gu Mingxi, it's all because of you. I hate crowded buses the



most. Being squeezed like this for three years is going to be the worst. After training today, you're going to have to buy me a popsicle to make it up to me!"

The rickety bus kept going. Gu Mingxi was silent for awhile, then reminded her, "Pang Pang, you don't have to do this for three years. Our new house is being finished and furnished. My dad said that it would be done by early October. After another two months, we'll be able to move in in December."

Pang Qian got back her senses, and stared at him a moment. Then she said, "Then how are you going to go to school on your own in the future?"

"Take the bus. I'll just hang the IC (integrated circuit?) card around my neck and scan it when I get on." Gu Mingxi had already thought it all out. "My house is at the first stop, so there will be seats when I get on. And when I transfer buses in the city, I only have to ride the bus for three stops. If the second bus is very crowded, then I can just walk the rest of the way."

"Gu Mingxi..." Pang Qian held back for a long time, finally saying, "I can't do my homework with you in the future anymore. What if my test scores are at the bottom?"

Gu Mingxi thought for a long time before answering her. "If there's something you don't understand, you can ask me at school, anytime. If you don't want other people to say stuff about us, then I can go to your house on the weekends to help you. Of course, you have to be willing to listen."

Pang Qian smiled, "Of course I am!"

After another while, she said, "Gu Mingxi, let's get into the same university."

"Hm?" Gu Mingxi looked at her, startled, his eyes shining slightly.

Pang Qian glared at him. "What?! You don't want to?"

"That's not it." Gu Mingxi lowered his head and smiled. "Okay, we agreed to it. You can't go back on your word."

Pang Qian nodded furiously. "I definitely won't."

The military training was really tough. The sun was really strong, and several students had fainted from heat stroke. The school was worried that something might happen. So they notified all the first year students to go indoors to avoid



the sun.

Teacher Dai was a young, female English teacher. She didn't listen to the higher official's words, and instead brought the students from Class 2 to a shaded area of the schoolyard. They all sat down in a circle.

Around them, there were several trees. After some tens of years, they'd grown sturdy with many leaves. Although the sun was strong, the shade and the breeze made it feel much cooler.

Teacher Dai had everyone in the class introduce themselves, and also suggested playing a game. Everyone had to use English to translate an introduction. This type of introduction was also a bit different. Aside from the general introductions, everyone had to name an animal that represented themselves. First, a student would introduce themselves [in English], and the next student would translate it, until they went through the whole class.

She wanted to take this opportunity to understand the class' English proficiency. Pang Qian was stressed out. Her (English) speaking was very poor, and she sat next to Gu Mingxi. She couldn't wait to dig a hole and sink into it.

Teacher Dai randomly pointed to a male student to start. He was very at ease, even standing up before speaking. "My name is xxx, I'm from xxx Middle School. I like xx, xx, and xx. I think that I'm like a dog. Loyal, lively, astute..."

When he was done, Teacher Dai pointed to the girl next to him to translate. When she was done, she gave her own introduction. The students had gotten into a well ranked school, so their ability was, of course, pretty good. They picked up the game very quickly, and continued on, one after another.

When it was Pang Qian's turn, she stood out and stammered a few sentences, and quickly sat back down.

Teacher Dai pointed to Gu Mingxi, "This student, translate."

Gu Mingxi felt that translating Pang Qian's introduction was a bit humiliating, but he stood up to say, "The student just now is called Pang Qian. She's from Origin of Flight Middle School. She likes reading books and the newspaper and swimming. She thinks that she's like a crab, because...her last name is Pang (*pangxie* means crab).



All the students laughed out loud, and Pang Qian's face flushed red. She lowered her head, her fingers gripping at her camouflage pants.

Teacher Dai gestured for the students to quiet down. She smiled and said, "Now it's your turn to introduce yourself."

Gu Mingxi nodded, cleared his throat, and then started. He spoke extremely fluently, as if he'd already planned and practiced it. He spoke with a quick pace and it sounded very good. Pang Qian didn't understand it. As he spoke, Pang Qian saw a gentle smile appear on Teacher Dai's face.

When Gu Mingxi finished, Teacher Dai pointed at Wang Song, "Student, come and translate it."

Wang Song was dumbfounded, as he scratched his head and said, "Teacher, I didn't understand... I know that his name is Gu Mingxi and that he came from Origin of Flight Middle School, but everything else..."

"That's okay." Teacher Dai asked another girl, "Can you translate it?"

Her face turned red as she shook her head.

Teacher Dai asked, "Is there a student who can translate it?"

"I'll try," a crisp female voice sounded. Gu Mingxi turned around and saw a short girl, with glasses and short hair, patting off the dust from her bottom as she stood up. Her face was oval shaped and looked very gentle.

She looked at Gu Mingxi and smiled, then started translating in a loud voice.

"I think that I am an ostrich. But not the kind in the saying 'ostrich mentality,' where an ostrich deceives itself, burying its head in the sand when an enemy approaches, as if because I'm unable to see my enemy, they also won't see me. I think I'm an ostrich because the ostrich is the largest living bird on the earth. Its wings have become vestigial, and it cannot fly. But the ostrich has a pair of robust legs. It can run very fast, and its legs are very powerful, even able to beat out many of its stronger predators. I'm like an ostrich. I don't have wings, so I can only count on my two legs. But so what. The ostrich is the world's largest bird, and I believe that I can become a strong (powerful, formidable) person."

When she finished, she looked at Gu Mingxi, then at Teacher Dai. "Teacher, my



translation is complete. I'm not sure if I got it right."

Teacher Dai said, "Why don't we ask Gu Mingxi."

Gu Mingxi's face was a bit pale, his eyes dark and deep. With an, "Mm," he sat down.

The girl also sat down, a slight smile on her face.

Pang Qian pulled at his sleeves, then asked into his ear, "Did she translate it correctly?"

"Mm..."

"Why... Why did you say all that in your introduction?"

Gu Mingxi frowned. He whispered back into her ear, "I thought no one would understand. There were a lot of words that we didn't learn in junior high. This was a journal entry I wrote once for English. I didn't know that she would be able to understand."

At this time, the short haired girl introduced herself. "Hello everyone, my name is Xiao Yujing. I'm from E City's Fifth Middle School. Before junior high, I lived in South Africa. My dad is a zoologist and works at E City's zoo now. When I was in elementary school, our family kept many ostriches as pets..."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian pulled at his sleeves again. "What did she say? Did she say something about ostriches too?"

Gu Mingxi was listening attentively, then gnashed his teeth, "Be quiet!"

Pang Qian pinched his waist, and whispered, "Gu Mingxi, you dare to yell at me!"

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 32

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 32 Ping Pong Selection

*Huh? Gu Mingxi, you sure are good at memorizing girls' names.*

---

Xiao Yujing said he was like a South African antelope. At a glance, it looks small and docile, but it can actually jump more than 3 meters.

During the military training, Pang Qian finally understood why Xiao Yujing described himself as an antelope.

She was clever, but it wasn't something that she made widely known. She looked very fragile, but her physical strength was actually quite good. When they were standing in their soldier positions(?), several boys and girls had already started to call out that they needed a break. But she maintained her upright posture, motionless.

It seemed like Xiao Yujing didn't know anyone. She rarely talked to others, and most of the time, she sat alone quietly in the corner. But this girl wasn't as gentle and quiet as her appearance belied— Pang Qian had been secretly observing her, and this was the conclusion she came to.

The military training wasn't just about positions, marching, marching with goose step (legs straight), moving drills, military chants and the like. There were a lot of exercises that Gu Mingxi had no way of participating in.

For example, when they were practicing marching with goose step, the instructor would call out different rows to practice the swinging of their arms. One, two, one, two, one, two... During that time, Gu Mingxi could only stand up straight, watching from the side.

The students in Class 2 were pretty friendly. At least from what Pang Qian saw, they were quick to accept Gu Mingxi, unlike the students who didn't dare speak



to him back when junior high started.

During the breaks from training, a few boys going to the restroom would come to ask Gu Mingxi if he needed to go. At first, Pang Qian thought that Teacher Dai had arranged for it. But later, she realized that wasn't the case. After 7 or 8 boys asked him, she figured out that they were asking because they wanted to.

And there were even a few girls that would come to find Gu Mingxi to chat. There was one girl who was rather pretty. Her hair was very long too, tied up in a ponytail at the back of her head. She would sit next to Gu Mingxi, and with a gentle face, ask about this and that. Occasionally, she would cover her mouth and laugh.

Pang Qian walked up behind Gu Mingxi with a water bottle. He didn't know that she'd come over, and was in the middle of answering that girl's question. "... full points in math. I lost two points in physics, full points in chemistry, and I lost 4 points in English..."

Show off... Pang Qian sneered in her mind. That girl, her face full of adoration, said, "You're so amazing. So why didn't you try to test into Vast Voyage?"

Gu Mingxi said, "My Chinese scores weren't good enough. I have to write the answers with my foot, and I can't write as fast as everyone else. Writing essays takes a long time, so whenever there's a composition portion on an exam, I don't do that well..."

"Gu Mingxi!"

Gu Mingxi heard Pang Qian's voice and turned around. Pang Qian waved the water bottle in front of him. "Thirsty?"

"..."

Because they were training, Gu Mingxi was wearing sports shoes. If he wanted to drink water by himself, he would have to take his shoes off. And then Pang Qian would have to help him tie his shoe laces again. But if he didn't take his shoes off, then Pang Qian would have to feed him the water. He weighed out the two options, and then answered, "No, I'm not."

Pang Qian's eyes narrowed. How much water had Gu Mingxi drunk that day. It was very sunny, and everyone was basking in the sun in the schoolyard. Others



had drunk about 4 or 5 bottles of water. But he'd only had one bottle in the morning, and another half a bottle in the afternoon.

Pang Qian said, "If you don't want it, I'm pouring it out."

Gu Mingxi looked at her, a bit puzzled. The girl beside him suddenly quipped, "Gu Mingxi, if you get thirsty later, I'll go help you get water!"

Pang Qian's eyes had narrowed down to a line.

Gu Mingxi finally caught Pang Qian's "unhappy" look. He smiled, "Why would you pour it out? You had to go so far to get it. Alright, I'll drink it."

As he was speaking, the girl with the ponytail, cried out in surprise, "Wah, Gu Mingxi! Your canine teeth are so cute!"

Pang Qian had brought the bottle of water up to his lips. She tilted the bottle, and fed him the water slowly. The girl to their side was quietly eyeing them. Pang Qian suddenly played a trick, and then the water from the bottle sprayed out. Gu Mingxi couldn't evade the stream of water. His face, neck, and camouflage shirt all got wet. The water also made him choke a little.

He looked a mess, but Pang Qian just looked at him innocently and said, "Sorry, my hand shook."

Gu Mingxi knew that she'd done it on purpose, and gave her an angry stare. Pang Qian made a silly face at him, and then happily ran off with her water bottle.

The girl with a ponytail frowned as she looked at Pang Qian's receding figure. She said quietly, "How can she act like that."

Seeing Gu Mingxi's clothes were all wet, she pulled out a napkin and helped him wipe it off. Gu Mingxi got up to dodge her. He said, "There's no need to wipe it. It's a hot day, so it'll dry quickly."

The girl pulled her hand back, disappointed. She asked, "Was that girl your girlfriend?"

She asked very directly, and Gu Mingxi naturally denied it, "No."

"Your relationship looks really good. You're always together. And during the training, you guys talk all the time. You're even deskmates in class."



“Ah, yeah.” Gu Mingxi felt his sweat dripping down his face, so he turned to wipe it off on his shoulder. He said, “She and I grew up together. We’re neighbors, and she’s just like a little sister to me.”

...

The military training finally came to an end. Pang Qian was dead tired. When she and Gu Mingxi left school, she turned a corner and walked into a small shop. She stood at the freezer, picking out an ice cream bar.

After careful consideration, she chose a chocolate cone. Pang Qian headed to the counter and pulled out a five dollar bill to pay. The boss pointed at Gu Mingxi to the side, and said, “That student already payed.”

After he said that, he stuffed the change into Gu Mingxi’s pants pocket.

Pang Qian licked her ice cream cone, and with a pout, “If I knew earlier, I’d have picked an expensive one.”

Gu Mingxi twisted his lips and laughed.

The two of them walked to the bus stop together. Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, “What was that girl’s name?”

“Xiao Yujing.”

“...” Pang Qian stared at him for a moment. “I mean the one after that, with the ponytail.”

“Ah, Jiang Zhiya.”

Pang Qian blinked at him. “Huh? Gu Mingxi, you sure are good at memorizing girls’ names.”

“I remember boys’ names just as well.”

“The more you try to hide something, the more obvious it becomes.”

“Hey! That’s not how you use that phrase!”

On the bus home, they were fortunate to find two seats at the back of the bus. Exhausted from the day of intensive training, and with the rhythmic swing of the bus, Pang Qian started feeling sleepy.

Her head was dangling in the air. Gu Mingxi looked at her, slowly leaning



towards him. Pang Qian's head hit his shoulder, her body relaxing, as she fell asleep against him.

Gu Mingxi let out a sigh and turned his head toward the window. A young girl was breathing evenly, leaning against his shoulder. Her eyelashes were long and thick. Her nose was turned upward. Gu Mingxi suddenly felt that 9 stops was too close.

How great would it be if there were 19 stops.

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E City's First High had a cafeteria. They didn't have lunch in the classroom like in junior high. Instead, they had prepaid meal cards they used in the cafeteria.

Pang Qian took on the responsibility of getting Gu Mingxi's lunch. The two of them stood in line together. When they got to the window, she put down two lunch boxes. "One two-portion rice, and one four-portion rice."

"For the two-portion, I want braised pork chop, stir fried vegetables, uh... And a poached egg."

"For the four-portion, salted chicken leg... Gu Mingxi, do you want tomato and eggs or string beans?"

Gu Mingxi, "Tomato and eggs."

Pang Qian smiled at the chef serving the food, "Tomato and eggs. Uncle, please give us a little more!"

She carried the two lunches to look for a table, and then they ran into someone.

"Xie Yi!"

Xie Yi turned around. Seeing Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, he waved. "Hi, Crab! Hey, you guys get a table. Let's eat together!"

The three of them put their lunch boxes on a table. Pang Qian went back to get two bowls of free soup, placing one bowl down in front of Gu Mingxi. And after thinking a moment, she gave the other bowl to Xie Yi.

Xie Yi pushed it back to her, "Drink it yourself. I have a drink."



Pang Qian didn't press him. The three of them had lunch together, chatting as they ate. The tables in the cafeteria weren't exactly convenient for Gu Mingxi to eat from. He lifted his right foot up to the table and used his foot to grab his chopsticks. He lowered his head to the meal box, and then put the food into his mouth.

Pang Qian already knew that Xie Yi was in Class 8. First High is a full high school, and each year had eight or nine classes, which meant there were a lot of students.

"Are any of our old classmates in your class?" Pang Qian asked Xie Yi. He shook his head. "Not even one. I checked the class rosters. There were only five of us from Class 6 that got into First High. Ling Tao is in Class 4, and Wang Chenfei is in Class 9."

"Ah, I'm not close to either of them," Pang Qian felt a bit regretful. "Sun Mingfang didn't get it in. She picked First High too, but her scores weren't good enough. She transferred to a general high school. Hey, Gu Mingxi, didn't Jian Zhe also pick First High?"

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Mm, he was 3 points short, so he didn't get in."

"Such a sham. His test scores were usually better than mine."

Xie Yi said, "Did you know, your Class 2 is a crouching tiger, hidden dragon (those with hidden talent). I heard the top five scorers on the entrance exam are all in Class 2."

Pang Qian thought for a moment. "Then is Class 2 the accelerated class?"

"I'm not sure about it, but it can't just be a coincidence." Xie Yi continued, "The top five in one class. After the assessment exams, we'll know."

Pang Qian had a bad feeling. She recalled the time they were introducing themselves in English. Most of the students in the class spoke very well. She didn't even understand it sometimes. Oh god! She couldn't have been added to Class 2 because of Gu Mingxi again!

After they finished eating, Pang Qian and Xie Yi went to wash their meal boxes. Gu Mingxi waited outside the cafeteria for them.



The sink was full of people. When they were in line, Xie Yi said to Pang Qian, “I didn’t think it was good to ask you while Gu Mingxi was there. But, Crab, are you interested in joining the school’s ping pong team?”

“Ah?!” Pang Qian was surprised. “Me? I’m a total beginner!”

“You’re not a beginner anymore. I went in yesterday to play a few rounds. You know, ping pong is a specialty at First High. But in the end, only a few people are really good at it. If you join, you definitely won’t be at the bottom.”

Pang Qian was touched. “How do you join?”

“You have to register, and then there will be a selection competition. More than a quarter of those who try out get in. It’s not that hard.”

Pang Qian blinked a few times, “Do you think I’ll be able to get in?”

“Just use your crab serve to show them!” Xie Yi said with a smile. “You will dominate and conquer!”

Pang Qian, “...”

Pang Qian was the kind to take action. The next day, she submitted a registration.

With regards to her actions, Gu Mingxi only said, “When the time comes, I’ll go watch your game.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t participate in the military march at the end of the military training. If he stood in the middle of the square, he’d draw too much attention, which wouldn’t be fair to the class who battled for their ranks. Teacher Dai said he could participate, but Gu Mingxi still dropped out on his own.

He sat at the stands on the edge of the schoolyard, joining the audience, watching Pang Qian walking in the line. She wasn’t tall, and lined up from short to tall, she was second from the end.

She walked with power and energy, her little chest puffed out proudly. It really was a sight to see.

When it was time for Xie Yi’s class to march out, Gu Mingxi saw him carrying the flag. He marched past the podium area, and then his marching turned into a goose step style. With a swish, Xie Yi waved the flag. Head up and chest out, he



marched along under the shining sun.

Gu Mingxi had to admit, he really was handsome.

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The day after the military training ended, First High's ping pong team held their team tryouts. It was simple. The 84 students who had signed up would be split into pairs, and they would play against each other. The 42 winning students would again be split into pairs to battle. This decided the 21 members they accepted. The remaining nine spots on the team would be decided by the coach.

Gu Mingxi went to watch Pang Qian compete. Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song also went. Even Jiang Zhiya went, though she had followed Gu Mingxi there.

Pang Qian was very nervous. Xie Yi stood at the side of the gym, instructing her, "You're bad at rallying, so you should try to score with your serve. The outcome should come in three hits, otherwise, there's no point to keep at it. It will just be a waste of energy." Xie Yi moved closer to Pang Qian, "Just count on your luck. Hit the ball at an angle. Your opponent looks nervous too, so seeing that, they'll think you're an expert at this."

Pang Qian, "So you're saying that I'm actually just a beginner?"

Xie Yi laughed out loud, "Not a bird, more like a crab. Let me tell you, you should hurry and learn from Deng Yaping (Olympic table tennis champion), her imposing aura. Crab, you're my disciple. Don't disgrace me."

Regarding the bird-crab. The word for beginner or novice is *cainiao*, where *niao* means bird. He calls her a *cai pangxie*, with *pangxie* (her nickname) meaning crab. Oh, cringe-y jokes...

Pang Qian's face reddened, "What if I lose?"

"Well, then you lose. In any case, I'll be on the team, so if you want to play, just come find me." Xie Yi handed his paddle to her, "Use my paddle. You don't know about paddles, but mine is definitely better than the ones the school has."

After listening to Xie Yi's instructions, she valiantly dashed off to a table for her match. She was first to serve. Just like Xie Yi did, she blew on her paddle first. Suddenly she shouted out a "Ya!" scaring the girl on the other side of the table.



Then she served the ball.

Just like Xie Yi taught her, she pulled the paddle back gently and hit the ball over with a curved swing. The ball hit the corner of the table, and the girl on the other side hadn't moved at all.

"Ya! Ya!" Pang Qian cried out, bouncing on her heels. She carried quite a similar demeanor to a professional player.

Xie Yi nearly fainted from laughter. Gu Mingxi's head grew sweaty as he watched, the corners of his lips also curved upward. Next to him, Wang Song said, "I really wouldn't have expected. So Xiao Qian plays with such style."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

In the first round, her opponent was scared into a loss. Pang Qian left the battle area joyfully, and gave Xie Yi a high five. Then she ran over to Gu Mingxi.

She swallowed down half a bottle of water, then said happily, "Gu Mingxi! I won!"

Jiang Zhiya curled her lips and said, "The whole gym heard your screaming."

Pang Qian lifted up her chin, "This is called grandeur. You wouldn't understand."

But in the second round, Pang Qian's grandeur was no use. Her opponent's skill was obviously better than her own. She had both the style and skill to back it up. Pang Qian shouted out, intending to scare her, but still didn't win within three hits. Soon, she lost the battle.

Dejected, she returned the paddle to Xie Yi. He said, "It's okay, there are still the other nine spots. I'll try to convince the coach to pick you."

Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian with her red eyes. He called out, "Don't be sad. [In war] there are victories, but also defeats. You didn't really learn it before, so getting to the second round was already really good."

Pang Qian gave him a depressed look. Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then taking advantage while no one was looking, he whispered into her ear, "I'll gift you a ping pong paddle in a few days. Then you can practice. Next year, when the old members leave, you can try again."



Pang Qian, “A good ping pong paddle is expensive.”

“Oh...” Gu Mingxi said, “Then treat it like an early birthday present.”

“My birthday this year just passed!” Pang Qian jumped up, “But it’s almost Christmas!”

“Okay, then a Christmas present.” Gu Mingxi smiled at her.

In the end, before Gu Mingxi could buy a ping pong paddle, Xie Yi already brought Pang Qian some good news. She was admitted to the ping pong team, one of the nine players that the coach selected.”

Pang Qian’s mood lifted greatly, thinking that high school was just too wonderful. But then, her mood dropped to the bottom. When lessons started, the school gave all the new students a diagnostic assessment. That’s when Pang Qian learned what the saying meant, “better to be a big fish in a small pond.” (lit. better to be a chicken head than a phoenix tail)

She finally believed that their grade’s top five students were in her class.

Xiao Yujing’s exceptional performance in Chinese and English, and her good scores in math, physics, and chemistry ranked her first in the grade. Second was a boy named Wu Min. And Gu Mingxi only came in fourth.

In the second and third years of junior high, Pang Qian had consistently ranked in the top 20 of her class. She’d even gotten into the top 10. So it had been a long, long time since she had tasted the flavor of ranking in the bottom.

And now, in Class 2 of First High, among 52 students— Pang Qian was first from the bottom (i.e. last).

Her performance wouldn’t be considered poor. Her lowest score was still above 70, but that still put her in last place.

Her nightmares from the first year of junior high were coming back. With the parent-teacher conferences that took place after the assessment tests ahead of her, Pang Qian even thought up the idea of dying.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 33

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 33 Small Parting

*Pang Pang, I'm going to be moving soon.*

---

In all of Pang Qian's memories, she had never ranked last in her class. The worst point she'd ever gotten to was that midterm exam in junior high, when she was 41st.

During the class break, she put on a thick face and went to Class 8 to see Xie Yi. She asked him about Class 8's test scores. Miserably, she found out that if she were in Class 8, she would have been ranked in the last 8 or 9.

Even though, in both cases, it was still the bottom of the class, being 9th from the bottom and being last were just different!

After school, Pang Qian stood at the bulletin board in the middle of the campus, staring at a bulletin that was posted several months ago, the color already a bit faded from the sun. She stared at the red college examination results, muttering to herself.

Gu Mingxi stood next to her and looked for awhile. Not understanding her intention, he asked, "Pang Pang, what are you doing?"

"Be quiet! I'm going to forget how many I counted!" Pang Qian said, irritated. She continued whispering for awhile. Then she asked Gu Mingxi, "Look, this bulletin lists all the students from the last year that got into university, right?"

Gu Mingxi looked at the tiny black print on the red bulletin. He nodded, "Yeah, even for the junior colleges."

"Then I'm doomed." Pang Qian deflated. She said, "Suppose that the last graduating year had eight classes. Each class has 50 students, which means there are 400 students total. But this list only has 376 people!"



Gu Mingxi's lips twitched as he looked at her. Pang Qian covered her face with her hands. "Who said that getting into a top high school guarantees that you get into university?! Gu Mingxi, it seems like I won't be able to get into university in the future!"

"How can that be," Gu Mingxi comforted her. "This was just a diagnostic assessment. Did you not study at all over summer break?"

Pang Qian looked at him as he was a monster, "You studied over summer break?"

"I did practice math problems and memorized English." Gu Mingxi sighed. "If you didn't study or practice, then it's to be expected that you would do poorly on the diagnostic assessment. Don't worry, when lessons start, you'll catch back up. If there's anything you don't understand, I'll explain it."

Hearing this, Pang Qian felt slightly better. She sat next to Gu Mingxi, she lived next door to Gu Mingxi. It was like having a free tutor. If she ran into something she didn't understand, she didn't have to worry at all.

When Pang Qian returned home, she handed her test results to Pang Shuisheng, who actually felt that his daughter hadn't performed that poorly. He figured that the students at a top school would all be very exceptional. Their exams would definitely be harder than at a general school, so the fact that Pang Qian scored more than 70 or 80 points already gave him great satisfaction.

Pang Qian, of course, didn't tell her father what her class ranking was after the exam. The evening of the parent-teacher meeting, she slipped out and went over to Gu Mingxi's house, waiting anxiously for Pang Shuisheng to return.

She pestered and rambled at Gu Mingxi until Li Han opened the door to their house, her voice drifting in from the living room.

Pang Qian's face paled in that instant. She sprawled onto Gu Mingxi's bed, burying her head in his pillow, pretending to be dead. "Gu Mingxi, farewell."

Pang Qian gloomily returned home. When Gu Mingxi walked out to the living room, he heard his parents talking in their room.

A bit later, Gu Guoxiang walked out and called Gu Mingxi into his study.



He sat down behind his desk, but didn't tell Gu Mingxi to sit down, letting him stand there in front of him.

Gu Guoxiang thought for a moment, then opened his mouth to say, "Mingxi, I heard your mom say that on this assessment, you came in 4th in the year?"

"Mm," Gu Mingxi nodded. "I didn't do well on the Chinese portion, the essays... I nearly didn't finish writing it. I also didn't do well on physics, I got a lot of questions wrong."

"Why were you unable to finish writing the essay?"

"Writing with my foot isn't fast enough." Gu Mingxi lowered his head, before lifting it back up. "But I'll practice more, Dad. Next time, I won't be as slow."

Gu Guoxiang stared at his son, then said, "In the future, society will write things out less and less. For the most part, everyone will type with computers."

Gu Mingxi, "?"

Gu Guoxiang stood up, "Sit down. I'll teach you how to use a computer."

With some apprehension, but also expectation, Gu Mingxi sat down at Gu Guoxiang's desk. Gu Guoxiang bent over and unplugged the keyboard and mouse. He moved them from the top of the desk to the floor, and then plugged them back in. He pointed to a button on the main chassis and said, "Press this, it's the power button."

Gu Mingxi reached his foot out and pressed the power button with his big toe. The blue indicator light lit up right away, and the whirring of the fan inside the chassis also sounded. The Windows 98 system prompt popped up on the screen, and then it jumped to the desktop. Gu Guoxiang said, "I'll teach you how to type. We'll put the keyboard and the mouse on the ground for now. When you get used to it, we'll order a custom computer desk that's lower to the ground. Just like you do homework on your desk, you can type on your desk."

Gu Mingxi was a bit excited, watching Gu Guoxiang crouching on the ground, pressing the buttons on the mouse. A white page opened, and he hit the keys on the keyboard, causing a line of words to appear on the screen.

"This is called the Intelligent ABC method. As long as you know the pinyin, you



can type it out. Since you're using your feet, you can't practice the correct fingering. If you want to type quickly, you can only practice diligently."

Gu Mingxi nodded. Gu Guoxiang pointed, and he would try to tap the right keys with his big toe.

The keyboard was very low on the ground. Since Gu Mingxi was already pretty clueless about the keyboard arrangement, in order to see it more clearly, he had to bend down pretty low. And because his toe was a lot wider than fingers, when he pressed the keys, several letters would pop up on the screen. Gu Guoxiang taught him how to delete.

After explaining it to him, Gu Mingxi learned how to type with his toes, albeit very slowly. The feeling of the keys popping back up was so interesting. He bent his head down and carefully familiarized himself with that feeling, and then watched as the words he wanted to write popped up on the screen. He felt very happy.

Gu Guoxiang stood at the side, watching for a bit. He turned around and pulled out a book from his bookshelf, then placed it on the desk. "This book is an introduction to computers. When you have time, you can look through it. In the future, you should spend one hour each night to practice using the computer. I'll teach you all the commonly used software."

Gu Mingxi nodded. "Dad, I'll definitely learn it!"

Gu Guoxiang pat his shoulder, "But you have to promise me, you can't play games. And on your next test, you have to be sure to score in the top 3."

Gu Mingxi lifted his up to look at him. With clenched teeth and a nod of his head, "I promise."

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Pang Qian didn't really part from Gu Mingxi forever. She was still alive. She was only greatly scolded by Pang Shuisheng.

When their lessons really started up, Pang Qian realized that the subjects in high school had gotten much harder. In math, they started with functions. This had originally been Pang Qian's weak point, and she didn't really understand it well.



And so, Gu Mingxi's tasks increased a lot. He wanted to ensure that Pang Qian understood all the new math and science material. He also wanted to encourage her to practice and study her English more. Aside from that, he also had to take care of his own studies, to practice his writing speed, and do other practice exercises.

He knew his father had high demands of him. Just getting into university wasn't enough. Gu Guoxiang clearly wanted Gu Mingxi to get into a top university. Getting into one of the 985 would be best, but at the least, a 211.

That is, Project 985 and 211 schools. 985 is a set of (currently?) 39 world class universities, and 211 has 116 schools...that meet certain high standards, *etc.* You can Wiki it for more info.

Gu Mingxi started to feel that there just wasn't enough time. Pang Qian would come over every evening to do homework together. And he was also responsible for explaining things to her. Before she came over, he would quickly eat dinner and spend an hour practicing the computer. After she left, he would busy himself with his own matters. He often didn't sleep until after midnight.

And he would wake up the next morning at 6 o'clock.

This kind of life was very tiring, but it was also full and productive. It's just that sometimes, Gu Mingxi would feel a bit at a loss. For example, when Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song talked about the NBA or La Liga, Gu Mingxi would find himself surprised that he hadn't watched ball games in a long time. Forget about watching the games, he even had to let go of the 6 o'clock sports news that he used to watch every night, so that he could practice using the computer.

Gu Mingxi recalled some things Pang Qian said to him in junior high, about Xie Yi. At the time, Pang Qian sat in front of Xie Yi, so she'd become good friends with him. When she came over to Gu Mingxi's to do homework, she'd tell him about Xie Yi. He had a lot of hobbies. Aside from ping pong, violin, and comics, he also like raising dogs, playing games, and playing cards.

According to Xie Yi, every day when he got home from school, he would play games. Then he would eat and then go out to walk the dog. When he came back, he would start his homework. Usually, he'd finish by 9 o'clock. Then he would practice violin for a bit, read some comics, and then go to sleep.



Gu Mingxi asked Pang Qian, “Xie Yi practices violin that late? Aren’t the neighbors bothered by the noise?”

Pang Qian looked at him with eyes that said, “You really don’t know about this world.” She said, “Xie Yi lives in a villa, it’s detached from other houses. He said that the room where he practices violin was specially soundproofed, so that no one outside could hear.”

That was how Xie Yi’s life was, carefree and unrestrained, happy and spontaneous. He didn’t seem to spend much time studying, but his test results were never bad.

Gu Mingxi couldn’t imagine living that kind of life. He knew that he wasn’t dumb. In fact, he was pretty smart. When it came to studying, that was something that came easily to him. But he also knew that in order to stay at the top of the class, he needed to be more diligent, more hard working.

After Pang Qian joined the ping pong team, every Tuesday and Thursday, she had to practice at school for an hour.

Gu Mingxi would wait for her so they could go home together. He didn’t want to wait in the classroom, so he would always go to the gym. A large group of people would be there passionately playing ping pong. Gu Mingxi sat off to the side, taking advantage of the time to study English.

Pang Qian knew a girl on the ping pong team. The one who eliminated her in the tryout competition. Her name was Zheng Qiaoqiao, from Class 5. Her name sounded cute, but she was mature and prudent.

Zheng Qiaoqiao and Pang Qian were practice partners, so naturally, she took note of Gu Mingxi. When they weren’t at the ping pong table, the two girls stood at the side chatting.

Zheng Qiaoqiao asked Pang Qian, “What’s your relationship with Gu Mingxi?”

In the first month of school, Gu Mingxi’s name was already known throughout the school. He didn’t have arms, but he had excellent grades and was also handsome.

Pang Qian said, “He’s my deskmate.”



“Your deskmate has to wait for you to finish practice?”

“We’re neighbors, and I have to accompany him home.” The more they interacted, the more Pang Qian liked Zheng Qiaoqiao. She felt like a sister. She said, “He doesn’t have arms, so taking the bus home isn’t very convenient.”

“That’s true.” Zheng Qiaoqiao looked at Gu Mingxi from afar. He sat by himself on a chair, his English book spread open on his lap, as he closed his eyes memorizing the words. She couldn’t help but ask, “He looks very studious, always sitting there studying. Is that all he does, study?”

“Of course not!” Pang Qian said. “Gu Mingxi’s actually very interesting.”

“How so?”

Zheng Qiaoqiao asked this, but Pang Qian actually didn’t know how to answer. She said, “In any case, when you spend time with him, it’s not boring at all.”

Just then, Xie Yi walked up to the two of them. “You’re not practicing. You’re even chatting here, being lazy!”

Pang Qian said, “There are no tables.”

“If there are no tables, you should tell me, and I’ll get one for you.” Xie Yi was covered in sweat from practicing, his face also flushed from all the exercise. He said to Pang Qian, “Crab, you’re my disciple. Of course I’ll cover for you.”

Pang Qian giggled, her fingers twisting at the hem of her shirt.

The coach called Xie Yi over, and he ran off. He was 16 years old, still young and not quite mature yet. He was taller than Gu Mingxi. His face was refined, like a piece of jade. His facial features were flawless, along with his figure. It was as if all the best qualities were collected together and graced onto one person.

Pang Qian’s eyes trailed after Xie Yi, and only turned away after he’d left the gym with the coach. Zheng Qiaoqiao looked at her for a moment, then asked, “And what’s your relationship with Xie Yi?”

“We went to the same primary school and junior high.” Pang Qian’s face reddened as she rushed to explain, “We were in the same class in junior high. I sat in front of him.”

“Hey, Crab—” Because Xie Yi called Pang Qian “Crab,” all the other team



members followed and did the same. Zheng Qiaoqiao said, “Do you like Xie Yi?”

Even Pang Qian wasn’t sure of her feelings for Xie Yi.

At first, she admired him. She thought he was handsome and smart, and had a great personality. He was the most special boy that Pang Qian had ever met. Pang Qian knew that she liked Xie Yi, but she’d always thought that it was the same kind of “like” you felt toward a celebrity. Pang Qian didn’t dare to carry any illusions about Xie Yi. Although she’d read many comics about Cinderellas and Prince Charmings, she never had the unrealistic thought that Xie Yi would like her that way.

But then, after Pang Qian became more familiar with Xie Yi, she gradually realized that he wasn’t someone very hard to become close to. He may look very cool, but he treated Pang Qian very amiably. And so, Pang Qian carefully put aside her thoughts and watched him quietly from the side.

With regards to Zheng Qiaoqiao’s question, of course Pang Qian wouldn’t admit to that. As if she had heard some funny anecdote, Pang Qian laughed out loud and said, “Yeah, definitely. I like Xie Yi. All the girls on the ping pong team like Xie Yi, right!”

After practice, Pang Qian picked up her backpack and walked to the side. Gu Mingxi was still sitting there, head down, book in his lap. Pang Qian walked over to him, and was surprised to find that he had actually fallen asleep.

It was very noisy in the gym. Whenever someone made a good play, they’d shout out. And the bystanders would also cheer. But even in such a place, Gu Mingxi fell asleep.

Pang Qian reached out to pat him on the shoulder, startling Gu Mingxi, who jolted awake, the book in his lap falling to the ground. Seeing his confused, half-awake expression, she asked, “What do you do at night that you’re sleeping here?”

Gu Mingxi ignored the glances from the side. He lifted his right leg up and rubbed at his eyes. “I only slept four hours last night, I’m really sleepy.”

“Four hours?!” Pang Qian exclaimed. “What were you doing?”

“I was working on a practice exam. It was too hard, so I unintentionally worked



on it until 1 o'clock."

Pang Qian said, "Gu Mingxi, you're becoming more hopeless. I'm not going over to your house today. Sleep earlier."

"No," Gu Mingxi looked up at her. Resolute, he said, "The midterm exams are coming up soon."

Pang Qian responded, "It's just once. Your eyes don't even look like they'll stay open."

She helped Gu Mingxi put his things away into his backpack. Then she helped him put it onto his shoulders, pulling out his sleeves and tidying him up.

Gu Mingxi still shook his head, "No."

"Why?"

"Pang Pang, I'm going to be moving soon." He didn't answer her question directly, only quietly saying, "Come over tonight. Tonight's homework is a bit hard. If I don't explain it to you, I'm afraid you won't be able to do it."

Pang Qian was silent. She pulled on her backpack and the two of them left the gym together. Then she asked, "Then what if you don't sleep enough?"

"It's okay," Gu Mingxi said. "I can sleep a bit on the bus ride back."

When they got to the school gate, a bike quickly passed them. It was a professional bike, with the handles very low. Xie Yi turned around in his seat and waved at Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, "Bye bye!"

It was the middle of October, and the temperature outside had dropped a lot. But Xie Yi still wore shorts. His coat was tied around his waist, occasionally flying up as the bike traveled. He was riding very quickly, and before Pang Qian could even say goodbye, Xie Yi had already disappeared with the wind.

She wouldn't say things like "Xie Yi was so cool" in front of Gu Mingxi, like she used to in junior high. She just foolishly looked after the youth who disappeared around the corner. After a moment, she finally came back to her senses, "Let's go, Gu Mingxi."

On the bus, they found seats. Gu Mingxi said he would sleep for a bit. Pang Qian, who was also tired from practice, leaned on his shoulder and also closed



her eyes.

She didn't find this at all inappropriate. As the bus drove, she quickly fell asleep against Gu Mingxi's shoulder. And Gu Mingxi slowly opened his eyes.

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He looked the window at the busy, evening street. Everyone was in a hurry, their faces revealing tired expressions. Gu Mingxi knew, he was just like them.

Although it was indeed a bit saddening, but that was how life was. How many people could live as carefree and unrestrained as Xie Yi?

Especially him, Gu Mingxi. His life's biggest goal was actually just to live a regular life like everyone else.

Xie Yi was special, but Gu Mingxi didn't want to be special at all.

When the midterm exams came, Pang Qian made a bit of progress on her scores. She came out 6th from the bottom.

Xie Yi told her that her scores would have put her closer to the middle ranks in Class 8, definitely not so near the bottom. Pang Qian also went to ask Zheng Qiaoqiao, who said that Pang Qian's scores would have definitely put her into the middle ranks in Class 5.

Pang Qian became all the more sure that she was able to enter the scary Class 2 because of Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi tested 3rd in their year.

Although he wouldn't say it himself, Pang Qian knew that he was a bit disappointed with that ranking. Gu Mingxi already put forth a great effort, but he still didn't perform better than Xiao Yujing and Wu Min.

Xiao Yujing was an oddity in Class 2. She wasn't cold towards others, and she always had a smile on her face. She was courteous and polite to others. But in the class, she was very clearly not popular.

Pang Qian felt that the boys stayed away from her because her scores were too good, and it made them feel pressured. As for why the girls stayed away from her, it was very simple. Xiao Yujing's looks were pretty good, she dressed fashionably, and she looked very elegant. If you add her amazing grades and



“better than you” vibe on top of that, who could handle being friends with her?

Xiao Yujing was actually very indifferent to it all. She would stay by herself all day long, never talking to anyone besides her deskmate. She sat at her desk all day, doing who knows what.

Once, Pang Qian pretended to casually pass by her desk. She (PQ) glanced over to see what she (XY) was doing, and was scared to death.

Xiao Yujing was actually reading an English novel.

Pang Qian told Gu Mingxi about it, on the verge of tears. “Class 2 is too scary! Everyone’s from a different planet! I want to change classes!”

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At the end of November, Pang Qian became aware that it was getting very bustling over in Apt. 502. Every day, a lot of people would go there. Then one day, Pang Qian saw a technician taking apart the air conditioner next door.

When she went to Gu Mingxi’s room to work on homework, she discovered that it was a lot messier.

Gu Mingxi told her that he’d be moving soon, so he was organizing his things.

Their family moved on a weekend morning in the middle of December.

Because Gu Guoxiang had to move for work related reasons, the company sent people to help them move. A moving truck from the metals company stopped at the bottom of the building, and workers from the factory came up the stairs. They helped move the household belongings and appliances down. Li Han had also packed cases of clothing and other items they’d need to use.

It was noisy outside all morning long, but Pang Qian was still sleeping inside her room. It had gotten pretty cold recently. With all the cold air, sleeping in the warmth of her blankets was still the best.

Pang Shuisheng went next door to help out. Jin Ai’hua came into Pang Qian’s room, “Qian Qian, Mingxi’s looking for you.”

Pang Qian pulled her head into her blankets and said, “Tell him that I’m sleeping.”

“What time is it, and you’re still sleeping? Mingxi’s moving away. Aren’t you



going to talk to him!”

“What’s there to talk about? I’ll see him again at school in a few days!” Pang Qian popped her head back out. “So annoying! I’m trying to sleep!”

In the afternoon, it quieted down next door. Pang Shuisheng moved a large cardboard box into Pang Qian’s room. “You’re still sleeping?!” He put the box down on her floor. “Hey, Mingxi said he had some things to give to you. He said you’d like it.”

Pang Qian sat up right away, “Where’s Gu Mingxi?”

“They’ve all gone downstairs. The car’s going to leave soon.”

Pang Qian pushed off her blankets and ran to the master bedroom’s balcony in her cotton sweater.

She opened the window and spread out on the railing, the cold wind suddenly stinging her cheeks. She looked down at the large truck and the people putting in the last few boxes. She saw Gu Mingxi, who was being helped onto the truck by a worker. The truck was very tall, so someone had to help you up into it. Someone lifted Gu Mingxi up into the truck, where he sat at the window. He suddenly looked up towards the fifth floor.

Pang Qian didn’t know what to think. In that instant, she crouched down, hiding herself behind the railing.

Then the sound of a large truck engine came. When she heard the sound head off into the distance, Pang Qian finally stood back up. She watched as the truck drove Gu Mingxi out of the Golden Compound.

She stared for awhile. When Pang Shuisheng brought out a coat for her, he realized that his daughter had already started crying.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 34

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 34 End of the World

*I just wanted to talk.*

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Most of the things in the box that Gu Mingxi left for Pang Qian were old.

Pang Qian sat on the floor, next to the cardboard box, pulling the items out one by one. There were a lot of comics in it. Complete sets too. About 80 percent were new, and they were all series that Pang Qian liked in junior high. At the time, she didn't have the money to buy them. But Gu Mingxi bought them, and said that if she wanted to read them, she could just go over to his house. Now that he moved away, he just gave all the comics to her.

There was also a portable CD player, a Panasonic brand one. Pang Qian knew it was very expensive. Li Han spent almost 2000 dollars (300 USD) when she bought it. Pang Qian knew why Gu Mingxi gave her this CD player. It's because, ever since they bought the CD player, Pang Qian was the one who used it the most.

Along with the CD player, there were also more than ten CDs of popular music. They were also the singers that Pang Qian liked. She recalled the times she went to the video store with Gu Mingxi. She would always pick up a CD and say, "Gu Mingxi, the title track on this sounds really good! I heard it a lot on the radio."

Gu Mingxi would reply, "Really? Then I'll buy it to check it out."

With thick skin, Pang Qian would say, "When you're done, you can let me borrow it."

And Gu Mingxi would shake his head, "Not lending it."

"You're so petty!"



In the end, of course he wasn't petty.

And in the very end, all the singers and CDs Pang Qian liked, he had left them all for her.

Aside from that, there were also some small trinkets and loose things. They were all things Pang Qian had played with. When she was over at Gu Mingxi's, she would casually mention, "It's so cute," or "This is really interesting, let me borrow it." There was a charming little hour glass, a crystal apple, an anime scale figure, and a thick sketchbook.

The sketchbook was filled with Pang Qian's favorite cartoon characters. She never knew about it, but it seemed like before Gu Mingxi drew her copies for her, he had to make sketches first. And this book was filled with those sketches.

"Really treating me as a trash bin." Although that's what Pang Qian said, she felt a lump in her throat. She pulled out the final item inside the box. It was a beautifully packaged box. She opened it up, and saw a ping pong paddle.

"At least there's one new thing." Pang Qian pulled the paddle out of the box, then waved it around a few times. The corners of her lips sprang up.

When the ping pong team was practicing, Xie Yi saw the paddle in her hand.

"Wow, when did you buy this?" Xie Yi pulled the paddle from her hands to examine it carefully. He even bounced a ball on it a few times. The original paddle was wood-colored, but there was red rubber over it.

Pang Qian didn't understand his meaning, so she just answered, "Someone gifted it to me."

Xie Yi said, "This paddle costs several hundred, but it's pretty good for beginners."

Pang Qian, whose monthly allowance was only 60 dollars, had a fright, "Several hundred?!"

"Yeah, probably about 800. Maybe even a thousand." Xie Yi pointed out the logo on the paddle for her to see. "Stiga, it's a Swedish brand. It's a bit more expensive, but it's really good to use."

"How can it be that expensive?" Pang Qian's eyes grew wide. "The DHS ones I



saw at the market were only 30 dollars! What's the difference?!"

"..." Xie Yi knocked on her head. "Street stalls sell watches for 10 dollars, even 1 dollar. The mall sells ones for thousands. They can all tell the time. So you tell me, what's the difference?"

Pang Qian answered honestly, "I really don't see the difference."

Xie Yi laughed crazily. "Can't beat you with words. Make sure you practice. Don't waste the paddle, and don't disappoint the person who gave it to you."

Just as he finished speaking, Pang Qian's eyes flicked over to the side of the gym. But this time, she didn't see that person.

That's when she remembered that Gu Mingxi moved. After school, he would go home on his own. He didn't have to wait for her anymore.

The place Gu Mingxi lived at now was called the New Gold Park. It was located west of E City, and the Golden Compound was located east of First High.

What that meant was that after school, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi would walk out the school gate together. Then one would head left as the other went right, their paths never to cross again.

Pang Qian returned home that evening. She looked at her several hundred dollar paddle, completely not understanding. Pang Qian called out at her parents door and said that there was a homework problem she didn't understand, so she wanted to call Gu Mingxi.

She hid in the living room and dialed Gu Mingxi's home phone. Gu Guoxiang answered, and she said, "Uncle, it's me, Pang Qian. Is Gu Mingxi there? I wanted to ask him a question."

Gu Guoxiang was silent for awhile, then he said, "He's here. I'll call him to the phone. But... Qian Qian, I want to give you some advice. In the future, if there are questions you don't understand, you can ask the teacher at school the next day. After all, Gu Mingxi doesn't live next door anymore. Courses are getting more rigorous, so he's also having a hard time."

Pang Qian was still, before finally saying, "I know. I'm sorry, Uncle. Next time, I won't. I..."



She suddenly heard an a faint sound on the other side of the phone, “Dad, is it Pang Qian?”

Pang Qian quieted. Gu Guoxiang said, “Mm.” Then she heard some sounds, like the phone was being handed over. Then Gu Mingxi’s fresh voice came on. With some delight in his tone, he said, “Pang Pang?”

“Mm, it’s me.” Pang Qian’s voice was a bit stuffy sounding.

“Is there a question you couldn’t solve? Which subject? Tell me.”

“No...” Pang Qian bit her lip, then told him the truth. Quietly, she said, “I just wanted to talk.”

“Ah?” Gu Mingxi was very surprised. Then he also lowered his voice, “What’s the matter?”

Pang Qian recalled the original reason for calling. She complained to Gu Mingxi, “Today, Xie Yi told me that the paddle you gave me is very expensive. Why did you give me such an expensive paddle? Do your parents know? If my dad finds out that I accepted such an expensive gift from you, he’ll definitely scold me.”

“That’s why you called?” Gu Mingxi spoke leisurely. “Don’t worry, they don’t know. I used my own pocket money to buy it. I don’t usually spend much money, so after a long time, I saved up a bit.”

Pang Qian still felt very unsettled about it. She said, “Also, if you’re moving house, move your stuff. Why did you leave so much stuff to me? And that CD player. Won’t your mom realize that it’s missing?”

“It’s not convenient for me to listen to music on my own when I go out.” Gu Mingxi’s voice carried a bit of laughter. “The next time we get a chance to go somewhere together, remember to bring it along. Just like we used to, we can each use one earphone.”

Pang Qian didn’t know what to say suddenly. Not hearing a response, Gu Mingxi asked, “What? You don’t like the things I gave to you? Although they’re used, but... Actually, you’re the one who used them all.”

“Nonsense!” Pang Qian cried out, upset. “Oh yeah, Gu Mingxi, I still haven’t



asked! What do you mean by giving me that big English textbook and those math and science exams?!”

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Only bare branches remained on the London Planetree at the side of the road. Now that it was winter, a lot of people were moving in to the New Gold Park.

Pang Qian started riding her bike to and from school. When she went to get her bike the parking spot, she noticed that there were fewer and fewer bikes.

Just as before, Old Zeng, who guarded the gate, was sitting there smoking. He stood at his briquette stove cooking something. When Pang Qian returned on her bike, she greeted him, “Grandpa Zeng!”

Old Zeng just smiled and said, “Little Fattie, Mingxi left, and now you’re all on your own.”

In addition to the relocation of the company’s homes, the factory was also being relocated. The factory in City West was already being put to use. There was a lot more space there, compared to the old factory. The facilities there were more advanced, and there was a new office building.

But none of that had anything to do with Pang Qian’s little family.

At Gu Guoxiang’s recommendation, Pang Shuisheng went to work at a private company. His work still involved welding things, and his salary was indeed better than before. But the workload was also a lot greater than before. He had to work overtime every few days, but he never got paid for that time.

On the other hand, Jin Ai’hua took the bus to the new factory in City West every day. She no longer worked in the finance department. Instead, she worked in the warehouse. Although the small worker’s lounge had heating, when she was in the cold and open warehouse, she could only wear layers of thick clothing.

Jin Ai’hua would always return home very late at night, and Pang Shuisheng often worked overtime. So, often when Pang Qian returned, there was no one home.

She learned how to wash rice and cook it in the rice cooker. As she got hungry, waiting for her parents to get home to make dinner, she would have a bowl of



instant noodles.

When she ate her noodles, she would think about Apt. 502 next door. The apartment had already been empty for a long time. Pang Qian had asked her father what would happen to the old apartment house. Pang Shuisheng said, "It will probably be arranged for a new worker to live there. The company won't just give up ownership to a company dorm/home."

When Pang Shuisheng was laid off, he received 70 thousand dollars compensation. He used 40 thousand to buy the deed to Apt. 501, which meant it no longer had a connection to the company.

In January of the next year, the factory move was nearly complete. Only a few finishing things remained to be done. They'd even stuck a seal onto the main gate. When Pang Qian rode her bike past it, she had some trouble adapting to the emptiness there. It had become so bleak and deserted.

She still remembered the image of it from when she was younger. It was such a lively place. Hundreds, nearly a thousand, workers would head in for work. The factory had a small movie theater, a bathhouse, a nursery, an auditorium, and even a small hospital.

Pang Qian was born here, she grew up here. Back then, it was like a small society had developed within the walls of the Golden Compound. This was something deeply engraved into her mind. More than ten years later, the outside world had changed rapidly. And this place had also finally become unrecognizable.

At the final exams for the previous semester, Pang Qian's progress declined slightly. She was fifth from the bottom of the class.

Bottom of the class, sixth from the bottom, fifth from the bottom... She'd already grown apathetic to the situation. She'd thoroughly accepted her new identity as an underachiever in her class.

After the parent-teacher meeting, Pang Shuisheng came home and gave Pang Qian another scolding. "Mingxi was third in the year. Third in the year! And you? You were fifth from the bottom of your class! There are more than 450 students in your year. You're probably the last of the whole lot! Aren't you ashamed?!"



Pang Qian wanted to cry, but no tears came. She really wanted to tell her dad that she'd asked around, and she would probably be around the 350 rank.

Over winter break, Pang Qian went over to Gu Mingxi's new house to play.

She'd been over previously, when they first started decorating the house. At that time, they hadn't moved any furniture or appliances in yet. It was just the ceiling, walls, floor, water, and electricity. Since Gu Mingxi moved near the end of the school semester, Pang Qian didn't have a chance to visit again.

She sat alone on the swaying bus for an hour, until she arrived at the terminal. She looked around and saw that Gu Mingxi was already there waiting for her.

Pang Qian ran over to him, complaining, "Why did you come to get me? I know the way!"

Gu Mingxi just smiled. "You have to walk for more than ten minutes. I just wanted to come pick you up."

As she and Gu Mingxi walked along the street, Pang Qian realized that the previously deserted street was now a bit more lively and bustling. There were a lot of cars on the street, and a few shops had opened up. It wasn't at all like the summer last year, not so stark as the first time Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian came here.

Gu Mingxi looked at the black plastic bag Pang Qian was carrying in her hands, and he asked curiously, "What did you bring?"

"Oh..." Pang Qian opened up the bag for him to look inside. "My dad made three braised ducks, and my grandma made a big string of sausages. My dad told me that when your dad was younger, he really liked to eat the sausages my grandma made."

"Mm, my dad really likes them." Gu Mingxi nodded. "But I like the braised duck more. The braised duck your dad makes is really good. And I even thought I wouldn't be able to eat any this year."

Pang Qian started laughing foolishly.

Gu Mingxi asked, "Is it heavy?"

"A little." Pang Qian checked the weight in her hands, then smiled. "But with



the thought of bringing you delicious food, I can carry it!”

Pang Qian followed Gu Mingxi back to his house. Because of New Year’s celebrations, both Gu Guoxiang and Li Han were home. Li Han helped take the bag from Pang Qian’s hands, and told Gu Mingxi to show her around the new house.

Without needing Li Han to say so, Pang Qian had already started inspecting around the house. The house now had furniture and appliances, not to mention people living in it, so it obviously became much warmer and filled with love. Pang Qian thought that Gu Mingxi’s house really looked nice. It was spacious and bright, and there was a light, lingering scent of paint.

She took special notice of the south facing room next to the master bedroom, and found that it had been turned into a temporary storage room. Aside from some cardboard boxes and some old furniture, there wasn’t really anything there.

After they finished looking around, Gu Mingxi brought Pang Qian to the kitchen where Li Han was preparing lunch. Gu Mingxi asked, “Mom, what’s for lunch?”

Li Han, “Sliced blackfish, braised beef, corn and chicken soup, and vegetables.”

“Awesome!” Pang Qian said. “It’s been a long time since I’ve eaten Auntie’s cooking! I love Auntie’s chicken soup!”

“It’s a recipe from my hometown.” Li Han hadn’t seen Pang Qian in a long time, so said with a big smile, “Qian Qian, what do you think of Mingxi’s new house?”

“It’s so pretty!” Pang Qian said sincerely. She looked around once more and said, “But there seems to be a room that hasn’t been set up.”

“Oh... Yes.” Li Han’s expression became a bit awkward. Then she told Gu Mingxi, “Aiya, the two of you, don’t play in the kitchen. Mingxi, take Pang Qian to the living room to watch TV.”

Pang Qian followed Gu Mingxi to the living room, and there was Gu Guoxiang. He sat on the sofa, watching TV with a sour face. From the moment Pang Qian entered the room, he continued to sit there. Even when she called out a



greeting, he only nodded his head towards her.

Seeing Gu Guoxiang looking like that, Pang Qian felt a bit frightened. She pulled at Gu Mingxi's sleeve. "Gu Mingxi."

"Mm?" Gu Mingxi turned to her.

In a small voice, Pang Qian said, "Let's go to your room."

Of course Gu Mingxi had seen Gu Guoxiang's attitude. Feeling a bit upset inside, he just nodded, "Okay."

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His room faced north, and outside his window was the street. But since their house was high up and there weren't that many cars on the street, with the windows closed, there wasn't any noise drifting in.

Pang Qian looked around Gu Mingxi's new room. She looked and touched things with interest. His room was very clean, colored with deep blue and the original color of wood. His bookshelf was set up, and it was convenient for him to take and put away things.

Gu Mingxi sat on his bed and asked, "Pang Pang, you didn't discover that there's something new in my room?"

"Something new?" Pang Qian looked around again, and finally saw that there was a short desk in the corner. And on top of the desk was a computer.

"A computer!" Pang Qian cried out. "When did you get a computer?!"

"After final exams." Gu Mingxi walked over to Pang Qian's side, then lifted his foot to the keyboard. He said, "I don't type slow anymore. More than 70 characters a minute."

"That's amazing!"

Pang Qian's only knowledge of computers was from her weekly computer class at school. She'd never gone online, and she didn't really know what the internet was. Gu Mingxi turned on the computer, and demonstrated how to go online to read the news, how to join a chat room. He even taught her how to play Minesweeper.

His toes moved across the keyboard expertly, and occasionally he would move



the mouse. Pang Qian was dazzled by it all, and couldn't stop herself from clamoring up, telling Gu Mingxi to let her play.

But after playing a bit, she lost interest. Gu Mingxi's computer desk was too low, so bending over to use it was too difficult.

Gu Mingxi felt a bit bad about it and said, "There are snacks and drinks in the cabinet. They're things you like, so you can get it yourself."

Pang Qian chose a bag of potato chips, and opened the bag with a *kacha kacha*. She looked at the posted on the back of Gu Mingxi's door and asked, "Who's that?"

"Hao Haidong," Gu Mingxi said. "China's best forward (football/soccer)."

"Don't know him."

Gu Mingxi laughed in spite of himself, "Who do you know?"

"..." Pang Qian thought carefully. "I don't know anyone."

"Yeah, exactly."

The two of them were silent for awhile, then Pang Qian asked, "Have you read any comics recently?"

"No, you?"

"Me neither."

Gu Mingxi, "I haven't read comics in a long time."

"Me too."

After five sentences, they went silent again. For some reason, a sour, aching feeling crossed Pang Qian's heart. Although Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian were still deskmates, they hadn't seen each other in more than ten days, since the final exams. In this moment, it seemed that, aside from studying, the two of them didn't have a common topic to talk about.

It wasn't like that before. In the past, there was nothing they couldn't talk about. They were nearly inseparable, from the moment they left for school until they left in the evening. Then Pang Qian would also go over to his house to do homework. They spent more than ten hours a day together, but they always had



something else to talk about.

Gu Mingxi went back to the computer, and pulled out some disks from the drawer. He asked Pang Qian, "Do you want to watch a movie?"

"Sure."

"What do you want to watch?"

"Whatever."

He picked a disk and put it into the CD-ROM. It was a Hollywood blockbuster, "Gladiator." Gu Mingxi had watched it already. But, although Pang Qian had never seen it, this type of bloody movie full of killing wasn't something she was interested in. And so, the two of them sat there, both rather uninterested.

Just then, a shrill scream sounded from outside the room. It sounded like a glass or ceramic dish had broken on the ground.

That sound was especially catching. It wasn't like someone had dropped a dish, but rather, like someone had thrown the dish onto the ground.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were both very startled, their eyes suddenly meeting. Pang Qian hadn't even started speaking yet, when they hear another crash. And then a third time, the sound of breaking dishware came.

That sound kept ringing in your ears. Pang Qian was stunned, in a daze. She looked over to Gu Mingxi. Then Li Han's voice suddenly cried out, "Gu Guoxiang! If you dare walk out that door today...! Don't come back again!"

Gu Guoxiang didn't respond to anything, but his voice (?) could be heard slightly mixed in with the sound of Li Han's curses.

Then Gu Guoxiang finally called out, "Are you done?!"

"Ah—" Li Han started crying. It was a piercing cry that made Pang Qian's heart jump up. She and Gu Mingxi sat there stiffly, as they heard Li Han calling out her accusations against Gu Guoxiang.

At her second sentence, Pang Qian quickly stood up. She stood in front of Gu Mingxi, and without hesitation, she covered Gu Mingxi's ears.

The youth sat in front of Pang Qian, his face pale. His whole body was taut, as



he shook greatly. Even his empty shirt sleeves started swaying.

Pang Qian put all her efforts into covering his ears. She knew she must have been hurting him, but she didn't care. She just didn't want him to hear a single word that Li Han said, or any of Gu Guoxiang's responses to his wife.

Gu Mingxi just stared at her the whole time. A deep confusion was carved into his clear eyes. Pang Qian looked down at him bravely, even smiling at him.

It was cold. Gu Mingxi's ears were covered by Pang Qian's cold hands. He could hear a buzzing in his ears. He heard his mother's voice, and occasionally, he'd hear his father's voice. But he couldn't hear the words they said clearly.

Those hurtful and vicious words entered Pang Qian's ears, one at a time. She was deathly afraid, as if it were the end of the world. But towards Gu Mingxi, she kept smiling.

Gradually, the world grew peaceful again. Gu Mingxi's panicked expression left his face. His body relaxed. In the end, he even closed his eyes.

And like that, Pang Qian pressed her fingers to his ears, until all the sounds from outside the room disappeared.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 35

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 35 The Drifting Winter Rain

*I didn't know what to do, so I came to look for you, Pang Pang.*

---

Only when Pang Qian was sure that the argument outside the room had concluded, did she finally take her hands off of Gu Mingxi's ears. She sat down weakly and let out a sigh. Gu Mingxi slowly opened his eyes, and the two of them looked at each other. The only sound they heard was the soundtrack playing from the computer speakers.

The music was meant to excite and rouse someone, not at all fitting to the current atmosphere.

Gu Mingxi's complexion had already returned to normal. He stood up and said, "I'll go out to take a look."

When he passed Pang Qian, she immediately grabbed at his shirt sleeve, which made Gu Mingxi stop in his tracks.

Pang Qian stood up and said, "I'll go with you."

The two of them walked out of his room and slowly walked toward the living room. It was oddly quiet in the house, not a sound to be heard. Pang Qian was a bit afraid. She knew that Gu Guoxiang and Li Han had been fighting. And then she heard the loud slamming of a door, though she didn't know who left the house.

When they got to the kitchen, Gu Mingxi saw his mother.

Pang Qian had gone into the kitchen previously. It had been very clean, cozy, and carried a delightful food fragrance. Li Han had been standing there in her apron, preparing lunch. But now, everything was in disarray.



Li Han sat on the ground, leaning against the refrigerator. She still wore her apron, but her hair was a mess, her eyes were hollow, and her body was covered in stains.

All the food dishes had been smashed. The blackfish, braised beef, corn and chicken soup... All the serving dishes were in pieces, the soup was all over the floor. Some of the broken dishware had even traveled several meters into the living room.

Gu Mingxi crouched down next to Li Han, and said gently, "Mom."

Li Han was silent for a long time. Gu Mingxi called out to her again before she gradually returned to her senses.

Pang Qian was already picking up the broken pieces of dishware. Li Han called to her, "Qian Qian, don't bother with that. You might hurt your hand."

Pang Qian stopped, and looked fearfully at her.

Seeing Gu Mingxi's family business, Pang Qian felt somewhat apologetic. She'd heard the arguments between Gu Guoxiang and Li Han very clearly. She'd been shocked. So now that she was facing Li Han, she felt a bit awkward.

Li Han slowly crawled back to her feet. She was in a difficult position, but her expression returned to its usual gentle demeanor. She said to Gu Mingxi, "Mingxi, there's nothing to eat at home. Take Pang Qian out to eat lunch. I'm going to take a bath and clean things up here."

Before Gu Mingxi could answer, Pang Qian said, "No need! Auntie, it's about time I headed home anyway."

Li Han said, "That won't do. You came so far to get here. How can you leave without eating lunch? Mingxi..."

Gu Mingxi didn't wait for her to finish before he said, "Mom, I'll stay at home with you."

Pang Qian nodded. "Mm. Auntie, Gu Mingxi doesn't need to come with me. I'll just go home."

She turned to leave when Li Han called out to stop her. Her voice sounded very weak, carrying a hint of pleading. "Qian Qian, Mingxi, go out for a walk, okay?"



Really, I just want to be by myself for a little while.”

Gu Mingxi looked at Li Han carefully, and asked, “Mom, will you be alright by yourself?”

Li Han wiped at her forehead with her hand. She closed her eyes and nodded.

Gu Mingxi turned to Pang Qian, “Then... Pang Pang, let’s go out to eat.”

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Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi left together. They took the elevator down, walked out the compound, neither one speaking.

They stood on the street and Gu Mingxi took a look around, trying to find a small shop to eat at. Pang Qian pulled at his sleeve, “Gu Mingxi, I think you should go home to your mom.”

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, “No, I’ll go after you eat.”

“...” His tone was firm, and his expression was stubborn. Pang Qian closed her mouth and obediently followed him down the street.

But they didn’t find a place to eat. It was New Year’s, so everyone had taken time off. And the big restaurants were very far away. Pang Qian followed Gu Mingxi as they walked around for a long while. Cold and hungry, she finally said, “Gu Mingxi, I want to go home.”

Gu Mingxi still said, “No, we haven’t eaten yet.”

“I’ll eat when I get home.”

“No.”

“There’s nowhere to eat here, not even a snack stand.”

“We’ll keep looking.”

“We’ve already walked down a bunch of streets.”

“There’s a big market up ahead. There’s definitely got to be a KFC over there.”

“I don’t want to eat KFC!”

Pang Qian stopped in her steps and pulled Gu Mingxi’s sleeve. Gu Mingxi’s down jacket was pulled taut by her. Without looking back, he said, “There are



restaurants up ahead. We just have to walk a little farther.”

“Gu Mingxi, I’m so tired.” Pang Qian sounded like she was nearly in tears. “I want to go home. You should go home too and stay with your mom.”

Gu Mingxi sent Pang Qian to the bus station. The two of them stood side by side. It was noon, but the sky had actually gotten darker. The wind had gotten stronger as well, scratching their cheeks as it whirled past.

Pang Qian was wearing gloves and a scarf. Her hair was blown into a mess by the wind. She said, “It looks like it’s going to rain.”

“Mm.” Gu Mingxi asked, “Did you bring an umbrella?”

Pang Qian pointed to the small backpack she had on, “Yeah.”

“I’m really sorry about today,” Gu Mingxi said. “Next time, I’ll treat you to a big meal.”

“Okay, I want to eat lamb skewers.”

“We can eat whatever you want,” Gu Mingxi smiled.

The bus came and Pang Qian got on. She found a window seat and looked outside.

Gu Mingxi was still standing at the bus stop sign, with a tall stature and calm face. He kept looking after Pang Qian, so she waved at him, “Hurry back home.”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “I know. Be careful on your way home.”

The bus started up. Pang Qian was glued to the window, watching Gu Mingxi disappearing into the distance. The street was very empty, and there were nearly no people out. Gu Mingxi’s figure was especially prominent.

When Pang Qian could no longer see him, she turned her head back, sitting there, staring into nothing.

Pang Qian felt that even if she had covered Gu Mingxi’s ears earlier, so that he couldn’t hear the argument being had, he still knew what happened.

There was a word that Li Han used several times— Slut.

“If you go to find that slut...! I’ll just die for you to see! I’ll take my son and we’ll die together!”



“Has that slut caused you to lose your ability to think clearly? Gu Guoxiang! You don’t even want our family anymore?!”

“What’s so good about that slut? She’s young? Pretty? She must be great in bed!”

“And the people at work all call you Chief Engineer... Gu Guoxiang, I’m warning you. If you don’t break off your relationship with that slut, I’m going to report you for having an affair! I’m going to let everyone at the metals company know that you’re a beast in human clothing! Refined scum! You son of a bitch, I’m going to ruin you. Don’t forget how long we’ve been married. All the shameful things people shouldn’t find out about, I know each and every one of them!”

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The wind brought in clouds, and the sky quickly turned dark. After awhile, heavy rain poured down, accompanied by thunder and lightening.

The rain swept across the bus windows. The cars on the road all turned on their headlights, some even turning on their emergency lights. Pang Qian was thinking that it hadn’t even been 10 minutes yet. She wondered if Gu Mingxi was about to get home yet.

Because it was raining, the streets were a bit jammed up. It was an hour and a half before she finally got home. She was very hungry, but she didn’t dare tell her parents that she hadn’t eaten lunch. She just feigned a gluttonous stance and had Pang Shuisheng make her a bowl of sweet potato soup. She hid in her room and gulped it down.

It continued raining through the evening. When it was nearly time for dinner, the phone in Pang Qian’s house rang. Pang Shuisheng picked up the phone and called to Pang Qian. “Daughter! Gu Mingxi is on the phone!”

Pang Qian walked out of her room. Thinking it was rather strange, she picked up the phone. She only heard the sound of the pouring rain and the swish of cars passing by.

“Gu Mingxi?” Pang Qian asked with some confusion. “Are you outside?”

Gu Mingxi didn’t say anything, only gasping for breath.

“Where are you?” Pang Qian became anxious. “I’m asking you, where are



you?!”

He finally spoke, “I’m near your house.”

“Huh?”

“Pang Pang, can you come out?”

“Yeah. Tell me the address, I’ll be there right away!”

“Don’t tell your parents about what’s happening in my family.”

“I know!”

“Oh, then I’ll wait for you.”

Pang Qian put on a coat and walked out with an umbrella. Jin Ai’hua stopped her, “It’s time for dinner, and it’s raining outside. Where are you going?”

“I...” Pang Qian turned to her dad and pleaded. “Dad, I’m going to see Gu Mingxi. You guys eat first, don’t wait for me!”

Pang Shiusheng was startled, but then pulled Jin Ai’hua back. “The kids must have some kind of activity. Let her go.”

Jin Ai’hua muttered, “What the hell is Gu Mingxi playing at. Didn’t Pang Qian already go over there for lunch? What’s he doing here now?”

“Don’t get involved in the kids’ matters.” Pang Shuisheng said to Pang Qian, who was putting on her shoes, “It’s raining. Make sure you cover Gu Mingxi with the umbrella. Don’t let him catch a cold, understand?”

Pang Qian nodded before rushing out the house.

She carried her umbrella as she followed the road from the Golden Compound out to the street. She walked and walked and eventually just started running, without any regard to the puddles and dirty water that splashed onto herself. Gu Mingxi said he would wait for her at a convenient store near the bus stop. After about 10 minutes, she finally saw him. As she expected, he was thoroughly soaked in water, looking like a drenched chicken. His IC bus card hang from his chest. His backpack was still on his shoulders, bulging with something. But it had already been soaked through from the rain.

“Gu Mingxi!” She ran over to his side, angry and anxious. She looked him over,



then said, “What are you doing here? What happened? Did you run away from home?”

Gu Mingxi took a deep breath and looked at her, water drip-dropping down from his wet hair. His face was all wet and his lips had turned purple. His jacket was soaked with water as well. Pang Qian pulled at his right sleeve and discovered that it was very heavy. When she let go, the sleeve swung back to his side.

Pang Qian pulled out a napkin and helped Gu Mingxi dry off his face. He was quiet for a long time. Then he finally said, “Pang Pang, my mom went back to her family home. Her plane ticket is tonight. She bought a ticket just for herself, and she already left.”

Pang Qian, “...”

“My dad... I called him. He said he was out of town and wouldn’t be back for a few days.”

“...”

“He told me to go to my (paternal) grandparent’s house, but I don’t want to go.” Gu Mingxi lowered his head. “It’s winter. I can’t stay at home by myself. The sleeves on my clothes are long, and I can’t take them off on my own. And I can’t cook food. There aren’t any convenience stores near our house. I told my mom that I could go with her, that I hadn’t seen my (maternal) grandparents in a long time. But she just cried. She kept crying and ignored me.”

He lifted his head to look at Pang Qian, his eyes dark and heavy. “I didn’t know what to do, so I came to look for you, Pang Pang.”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 36

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 36 You're Not Special

*Go! You're not going to go? Do you believe me when I say I'll call my mom over to wash your underpants?!*

---

Pang Qian carried her umbrella and led Gu Mingxi back to her house.

When they returned to the Golden Compound, Old Zeng greeted them warmly, "Is Mingxi coming to Fattie's house for New Year's greetings?"

Gu Mingxi lowered his head, and Pang Qian smiled as she said to Old Zeng, "That's right, Grandpa Zeng. Gu Mingxi came to my house for dinner."

As they walked up the stairs, Gu Mingxi suddenly stopped in his steps.

Pang Qian turned back to look at him, "What's wrong?"

He lifted his head to look at Pang Qian, standing on the landing. He said quietly, "It's New Year. Going to your house in this state doesn't seem very suitable."

"What's there to be suitable about?" Pang Qian ran down the stairs and pushed at his back, pushing him up the stairs. "You're still so polite with my parents! Hurry up, your clothes are all wet."

Seeing Gu Mingxi at the door, Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua were both very startled. But they quickly calmed themselves. Pang Shuisheng brought Gu Mingxi to his room to help him change out of his wet clothes. Jin Ai'hua went to the kitchen to prepare dinner for the two kids.

Pang Qian hadn't eaten lunch or dinner yet, so she was starving. She slipped into the kitchen to find something to eat and was caught by Jin Ai'hua.

"What's going on with Gu Mingxi?" she asked her daughter. "Why is he



carrying such a big bag? Weren't you at his house in the afternoon already?"

Pang Qian held a crispy chicken tender in her hand, and she finally whispered, "His dad is out of town. And his mom...seems to have gone back to her family home for some reason."

"Why didn't Mingxi go with her?"

Pang Qian blinked and just said, "The plane tickets were too expensive?"

Jin Ai'hua actually believed it. She asked, "Then why didn't Mingxi go to his grandparents' house?"

"Mom, you don't know. Gu Mingxi's (paternal) grandparents have never liked him. He didn't want to go."

Jin Ai'hua frowned as she asked, "Did you tell him to come to our house?"

Pang Qian hesitated, then she nodded. "It's just a few days, Mom. Gu Mingxi doesn't have anywhere to go. Don't be too mean."

Jin Ai'hua put her arms on her hips and glared. "When have I ever been mean to him?"

Inside his room, Pang Shuisheng helped Gu Mingxi take off his wet clothes. He found out that everything was completely soaked, and Gu Mingxi's body was very cold. Pang Shuisheng dried off his body and hair with a towel. Then he went through his dresser and found a package of new underpants. "Men's boxers. But kid, just put them on for now."

Standing naked in front of Pang Shuisheng, and even having him help put on underpants, truly made Gu Mingxi feel very awkward. But this wasn't the time to say that he'd wear them himself. Pang Shuisheng helped Gu Mingxi put on a pair of his pajamas. Because he was shorter than Gu Mingxi, his pants hung off the ground when Gu Mingxi wore them. Pang Shuisheng said, "Tomorrow, I'll go buy you a new pair of pants."

Gu Mingxi smiled, "No need, Uncle. Since I use my feet to do things, it's not that convenient if they're too long."

The two of them walked out to the living room, where Pang Qian was helping Jin Ai'hua set the table. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua had already eaten. He pat



Gu Mingxi's back, "You and Qian Qian eat. Uncle and Auntie will go watch TV. Take your time to eat. Make sure you eat a lot."

"Uncle." Gu Mingxi felt very apologetic. "I've really brought too much trouble."

"Silly kid, don't be all polite with me. Just treat this as your own home, got it?" Pang Shuisheng tousled Gu Mingxi's hair, then pushed him to sit down at the table. He said to Pang Qian, "Qian Qian, get Gu Mingxi a bowl. And some chopsticks!"

Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua went to their room and closed the door, leaving Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi alone in the living room.

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Pang Qian had a lot of experience eating with Gu Mingxi. The table in her house was pretty tall, which made it more difficult for Gu Mingxi to eat. Pang Qian carefully helped him add food to his bowl and served him soup. He lowered his head and pushed the food into his mouth. He was clearly very hungry. After he finished a bowl, Pang Qian helped him get another one. Then Gu Mingxi slowed his eating pace.

Pang Qian put some stir fried beef into his bowl. He lifted his eyes and looked at her, "What did you say to your parents?"

Pang Qian repeated what she told Jin Ai'hua. Gu Mingxi nodded, "Mm, thanks."

"..." Pang Qian asked in a quiet voice, "What's going on with your parents now?"

"Did you hear everything when you were at our house earlier?" Gu Mingxi held his chopsticks in his toes and slowly picked up the food in his bowl. "They fought before too, but it was never as bad as today. Before... Although I didn't hear clearly, I still knew that my dad had another woman outside."

Pang Qian's eyes grew bigger, "Huh?"

"Mm. A few days ago, my mom even came to ask me, if they got divorced, who I would go with."



This news was really too intense for Pang Qian to take in. After all, in Pang Qian's eyes, Gu Guoxiang and Li Han were a loving couple who treated each other with great respect. She never would have thought that Gu Mingxi's family was on the edge of collapsing.

She asked, "What did you say?"

"At the time, I didn't know how serious their argument was, so I just said I didn't know. I also said I didn't want them to get divorced." Gu Mingxi's eyes drooped, his thick eyelashes blinking slowly. "My mom definitely has feelings for my dad. As for my dad... I think... That he still likes my mom. It's just..."

He shrugged his right shoulder and Pang Qian looked at his empty sleeve. "I don't have arms. He just really wants a healthy child."

"But, but..." Pang Qian felt very anxious for some reason. "You're really amazing. You do well in school, and you'll definitely be able to get into a good university. You also draw really well. Your English is great, and you could work in translating."

"So what?" Gu Mingxi smiled bitterly. "My dad was watching the news before. It was talking about how when students get admitted to university, a lot of parents would hold a teacher appreciation dinner, right. Anyway, it was to celebrate getting into university. Get a few tables at a restaurant and that. When my dad saw the news, he told me that after I get into university, he won't hold one of those."

Pang Qian was dumbfounded.

Gu Mingxi said, "He also said that when I get married, unless I wear prosthetic arms, he wouldn't invite his friends to the banquet. Once, when he drank too much, he even said that he himself wouldn't go to my wedding. He didn't want to have to face all the stares and criticisms that my wife's family would have."

Pang Qian clenched her teeth and Gu Mingxi let out a sigh. "Sometimes my dad really confuses me. Pang Pang, sometimes I also wonder if, because I don't have arms, I'm inferior or shameful. Whenever we go out, my dad will walk farther away from me, as if he were scared that others might think I were his son."



“No way!” Pang Qian called out impatiently. “Gu Mingxi, don’t have such nonsensical thoughts. Look, your mom never thinks like that. My parents don’t think like that either. And there’s me! I really, really, really have never, never, never, thought that you were anything special.”

Her nervous expression, along with her serious tone as she said the three “reallys” and three “nevers,” really made Gu Mingxi laugh out loud. His eyes were clear and sparkling, his lips upturned, two canine teeth slightly visible. He smiled as he said, “I know. Hurry up and eat. When we finish eating, I still have to work on the winter homework assignments.”

The topic changed too suddenly, leaving Pang Qian stunned. “Win-winter homework?”

“Mm, I brought it over,” Gu Mingxi said seriously. “There will be another diagnostic test when school starts back up. You’re not planning to get last place again, are you?”

Pang Qian quickly made a bow to him. “*Pei pei pei!* Don’t curse me from the start of the year!”

When she finished eating, Pang Qian went to wash the dishes. Pang Shuisheng called Gu Mingxi to take a shower, and then explained their sleeping situation that night.

Although Pang Shuisheng’s house had three rooms, since no one had used one of them for a long time, it had already become a storage room. It was stuffed full with Pang Shuisheng’s work tools. There was no way anyone could sleep inside there. Since there wasn’t a sofa in the small bedrooms, Pang Shuisheng let Gu Mingxi sleep in Pang Qian’s bed. And Pang Qian was relegated to sleep on the floor in the master bedroom.

Pang Qian hadn’t yet expressed her opinion, when Gu Mingxi already disagreed strongly with the arrangement.

He just said, “Pang Qian’s a girl. I’m a boy. I’ll sleep on the floor.”

Pang Shuisheng was in a difficult situation. “Where are you going to sleep though? The living room is on the way to the washroom, so if you sleep there, how can anyone walk past?”



Gu Mingxi knew this was true, but also didn't have any ideas. Pang Shuisheng told Jin Ai'hua to tell Pang Qian that she'd been sleeping with her (mother). Pang Qian refused saying, "I don't want to! Mom snores really loudly!"

After some discussion, Pang Qian said nonchalantly, "Just let Gu Mingxi sleep on the floor in my room. We slept in the same room when we went to Shanghai and it was fine."

Pang Shuisheng shot a lot at Jin Ai'hua. She was extremely unhappy, but after considering Gu Mingxi's character, she clenched her teeth and agreed.

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They all went and busied themselves. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua helped Gu Mingxi set up a sleeping spot in Pang Qian's room. Two thick cotton mattress pads were laid on the floor, along with a duvet and a wool blanket. When they finished, they returned to their own room.

When Gu Mingxi went to shower, Pang Qian helped him tidy up his bag. She really admired him. Gu Mingxi's winter break homework was wrapped up in a plastic bag, so it wasn't touched by the rain at all. But the clothes he brought along were soaked.

"Fool." Pang Qian took out his clothes, one piece at a time, and then tossed them into a washbasin. She brought it over to the washing machine, and was about to ask her mom to help her wash it the next day, when she heard a strange sound from the bathroom.

Pang Qian walked over to see. The bathroom door was open, and Gu Mingxi had already finished his shower. He still wore the pajamas that Pang Shuisheng had given him. He stood with his left leg, and his right foot was in the sink, washing his clothes. His toes gripped onto a clear bar of soap as he started washing the wet clothes he'd changed out of.

There were two basins next to his left foot. One had his jacket, sweater, and pants inside. The other had a cotton shirt and pants. In the sink there was a pair of socks and underpants. He was struggling to wash his clothes because the soap was both large and slippery. He couldn't keep a hold of it, and it would often slip into the sink.

His body swayed a bit, his two shirt sleeves swinging continuously. When he



turned and saw Pang Qian, he smiled a bit embarrassingly. “You came at just the right time. Pang Pang, help me bring that chair over. If I sit, I can wash my clothes in the sink.”

Pang Qian said, “Don’t wash it. My mom will wash it together in the washing machine tomorrow.”

Gu Mingxi said, I’m not washing the outer clothing, I can’t. But I wanted to wash my underclothes myself... And the washing machine isn’t as sanitary.”

Pang Qian looked at him, then looked at the clock on the wall. It was already past 9 o’clock.

“Wait for you to finish, and then you’re still going to do homework? Please.” Pang Qian rolled up her sleeves. “It’s just a cotton shirt, a pair of socks, and a pair of underpants, right? Move aside, I’ll help you wash it.”

How could Gu Mingxi agree to that. “No need. Just help me bring a chair over, I can wash it myself.”

“You’re so annoying!” Pang Qian reached for a towel, then helped him dry off his right foot and pushed it to the ground. Gu Mingxi nearly lost his balance, his left foot jumping back a bit. He shouted angrily, “Pang Qian!”

“This is my house, what I say goes!” Pang Qian pushed Gu Mingxi out of the bathroom. “Go to my room. I’ll come when I’m done washing this. You scared me. I have a pile of homework I still haven’t done.”

Gu Mingxi stood there, not moving.

Pang Qian turned around and glared at him. “Go! You’re not going to go? Do you believe me when I say I’ll call my mom over to wash your underpants?!”

Gu Mingxi turned and slipped away.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 37

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 37 Midnight Heart to Heart

*Okay, I accept your apology. I forgive you.*

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Previously, Pang Qian rarely did any household chores. Before she entered high school, she'd lived a very pampered life (lit. ten fingers have never touched the spring water). Even her underclothes were left to Jin Ai'hua to wash. But after the change in her parents' work schedules, their formerly stable and ordered life was broken. In order to catch the bus in the mornings, Jin Ai'hua got up at the crack of dawn, and she would return home very late. Although she hadn't asked anything of Pang Qian, Pang Qian really couldn't bear sitting back and seeing her parents come home from a long day of work, to still have to take care of all the chores.

So, when Pang Qian got home, she would sweep and clean the floor, wash and cook rice, and hand wash some clothes. It wasn't something that she tried to take credit for or make known, but Jin Ai'hua still spoke with Pang Shuisheng privately, saying that Qian Qian was growing up and understood a lot more things.

Pang Qian stood at the sink to help Gu Mingxi wash his clothes. They were all undergarments, but she didn't feel there was anything particular about it. At this time, Pang Shuisheng passed by the washroom, wearing a coat. The father and daughter's eyes met. Pang Shuisheng lifted his cellphone and said quietly, "I'm going outside for a smoke, and I'm going to give Mingxi's dad a call."

"Dad!" Without a care for the soap all over her hands, Pang Qian reached out to grab a hold of his arm. After thinking for a moment, she said softly, "Just let Uncle Gu know that he's safe. Don't tell him about all the other stuff."

Pang Shuisheng looked at his daughter, then hesitatingly asked, "Do you know



something?”

Pang Qian bit her lip, then said, “When I went over to Gu Mingxi’s house today, I heard Uncle Gu and Auntie Li fighting. It was a really big fight. That’s why Gu Mingxi came to our house. Dad, Uncle Gu... He seems to be having an affair. And Auntie Li was really hurt. Gu Mingxi told me not to tell you guys, but...”

As Gu Guoxiang’s longtime friend and former coworker, Pang Shuisheng definitely had some ideas about Gu Guoxiang’s private life. He wanted another child, and everyone knew that. But Li Han had problems conceiving. So, a lot of the workers in the factory estimated that the two of them would divorce.

Pang Shuisheng couldn’t accept such an outcome, but he was, after all, an outsider in their affairs. And then his own daughter was also linked in many ways to their son’s disability, so who was he to comment on it.

He only felt wronged for Gu Mingxi. He was such a good boy, and none of this was his fault, but he would be the one to bear the terrible outcome.

Pang Shuisheng’s eyes gradually warmed. He pat his daughter’s head and said, “You did the right thing, telling me about it. Don’t worry. When I call Mingxi’s dad, I’ll just let him know that he’s safe. As for everything else, we’ll talk about it when both his parents return.”

Pang Qian nodded.

Pang Shuisheng said, “Since you’re on vacation now, spend some more time with Mingxi. Don’t bully him anymore, okay?”

Pang Qian pouted. “When do I bully him? I’m even helping him wash his clothes.”

Pang Shuisheng looked at the clothes in the sink and sighed. “You should be helping him. If not for Mingxi, how could you have gotten into such a good school?”

Pang Qian nodded obediently. Pang Shuisheng was just about leave, when he turned back around. “But you can’t help Gu Mingxi with things like using the toilet again. If he needs help, just tell him to find me. You two aren’t little kids anymore, so it’s better to avoid such situations.”



It would have been fine if he hadn't mentioned it. But now that he had mentioned it, Pang Qian recalled that summer, when they were in a public washroom in the Shanghai convention center, and she saw... Pang Shuisheng left the house, and Pang Qian went back to washing Gu Mingxi's undergarments, but her whole person wasn't quite right.

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When Pang Qian returned to her room, Gu Mingxi had already worked a bit on his homework.

He turned the ceiling light on and sat on the bedding on the floor. His notebook was opened on the floor, the pen in his hand writing nonstop. There were a few sheets of scratch paper to his side, filled with images and formulas. Pang Qian had spent the first several days of winter break very leisurely, but seeing him put in so much effort, a very urgent feeling started to emerge within her.

"What are you going?" She sat down on the floor next to Gu Mingxi and looked over at his notebook. Gu Mingxi turned to look at her. Pang Qian had just showered, her wet hair spread over her shoulders, her face flushed, a light scent of shampoo still lingering on her.

He suddenly felt that him sleeping in her room was a terrible idea. His heart grew restless, but he had to use all his efforts to calm himself.

Gu Mingxi couldn't help his toes curling up, as the back of his foot grew taut. He pushed the book towards Pang Qian and said, "I found a math practice book. Every night, I do one exam set."

Pang Qian took his book to see, "Is it hard?"

"For you, it might be a bit hard."

Pang Qian made a face at him, then gave him a shove. "Show off!"

Gu Mingxi was unhappy, "How was I showing off?"

"You're showing off by saying you're smarter than me!"

"I just put more time into it." Gu Mingxi smiled. "You're actually very smart."

This delighted Pang Qian. "Haha, you finally realized."



Gu Mingxi turned away, and said lightly, “But sometimes, you’re really a bit slow.”

Pang Qian smacked him on his head with the book. “You’re the slow one!”

It was already very late, and Pang Qian really didn’t want to do anymore homework. She picked up a romance novel and lied down on her bed. Gu Mingxi was still going over test papers on the floor. But it was hard for him to concentrate, because every so often, Pang Qian would let out a noise.

As she was reading, she would laugh out loud, “kekeke” or “hahaha.” It was getting on Gu Mingxi’s nerves, but he could only clench his teeth and endure through it.

Pang Qian also ate snacks – scorched rice. Crunch, crunch, crunch as she chewed happily. Occasionally, she would ask Gu Mingxi, “Hey, Gu Mingxi, do you want to eat some? I’ll feed you.” The scorched rice made her thirsty, so she would also drink some cola. After she gulped down the cold cola, she let out a big belch. “Ah... So refreshing!”

Gu Mingxi’s face was covered in black lines. But he had to endure!

But all that was nothing. Pang Qian also rolled around on her bed, and when she got to a particular spot, she would reach her leg out and kick Gu Mingxi’s back. It was always very sudden, and would give Gu Mingxi a scare. One time, she used so much power that she nearly kicked him over.

When she kicked him, Pang Qian would call out, “Foshan shadow kick!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

He’d only completed half of his test paper, but he just gave up.

Pang Qian held her scorched rice, sitting on her bed. She watched as the black-faced Gu Mingxi used his feet to tidy his bedding. She asked, “You’re not working on your practice problems anymore?”

“Mm.”

“Are you saying I’m noisy?”

“...”



She blinked at him, then said pitifully, “Continue doing your things. I won’t bother you anymore.”

“Forget it, it’s already late.” Gu Mingxi looked up at her, not even a tiny bit angry. “Go to sleep.”

When they were washing up before sleeping, Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi prepare a new toothbrush, and even helped him squeeze the toothpaste. Gu Mingxi stood in front of the sink, his right foot up on the counter. With toothbrush in foot, he bent over to brush his teeth.

No matter what, it was much more convenient living in his own home compared to Pang Qian’s. So he had to accept Pang Qian’s help. For example, when she helped him hold the cup to rinse after brushing. In the end, Pang Qian helped him wash his face with a towel.

It had already been a long time since Gu Mingxi asked anyone to help him with such small matters, like washing his face or brushing his teeth. Even Li Han wouldn’t concern herself with those things. So, when Pang Qian stood in front of him, warmly washing his face with a towel, a strange feeling started to surface inside his heart. He knew that this would be considered a pretty intimate act. It wasn’t something just anyone would be willing to help him with. And he wouldn’t accept most people’s help.

These were small things that he could do on his own, but he didn’t turn away Pang Qian’s help. On the contrary, he quite enjoyed it.

Who told her to kick me earlier? This is her way of making it up to me, Gu Mingxi thought.

The two of them slept in their beds, each with their own delicate thoughts.

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Pang Qian was a girl and this was her room. But right now, there was a boy sleeping on her floor. Occasionally, there came the sound of his blankets shuffling, or there’d be a cough from the floor. His breathing was very steady. And in that dark room, that sound of breathing, which clearly belonged to a boy, sounded very clearly.

Pang Qian felt a bit uneasy inside. Gu Mingxi felt even more uneasy. Even



though the matters at home brought him troubles, he was still a teenage boy. He was nearly 17 years old, at that moment, the thought of the girl sleeping in the bed beside him left his heart throbbing.

Then he felt that his thoughts were getting too dirty, and he felt rather ashamed.

The two of them, one on the bed, one on the floor, were both tossing and turning, unable to sleep.

Gu Mingxi's thoughts were a big mess. And just then, Pang Qian spoke, "Gu Mingxi, are you asleep?"

"No," he answered.

"There are some things I want to say to you."

"..." Her tone was very serious, and it was a bit frightening. Gu Mingxi grew anxious and asked, "What is it?"

"I... I don't know how to say it." Pang Qian hugged her blanket and bit her lip. "Gu Mingxi, I-I..."

Gu Mingxi waited silently. He was very curious, but didn't press her, giving her all the time she needed.

Pang Qian finally said, "I want to apologize to you."

Gu Mingxi hadn't expected that, so he asked, "For what?"

"I've never apologized to you." Her voice was apprehensive and she spoke slowly. "That year, if I hadn't thrown the frisbee onto the transformer, you wouldn't have lost your arms. If you still had your arms, your parents wouldn't be fighting right now. And, even though I know apologizing won't fix anything, I still never apologized to you. I... I didn't dare to. I was scared that you would yell at me. Even though you normally treat me really well, but I really don't know if you blame me, deep inside. I pretended to forget everything that happened back then. But I just didn't dare to think about it, and I didn't dare to talk to you about it. I... Gu Mingxi, actually, I'm not asking you to forgive me. You can blame me if you want, but I still wanted to say this to you today. Gu Mingxi, I'm sorry."

There was a very, very long silence.



Tears fell from Pang Qian's eyes, but she didn't make a sound. She hid her head inside her blankets, unwilling to hear the movement beneath her bed. She wished he was asleep, that he hadn't heard the things she'd said. She even wished that he would jump up and yell at her. That would probably make her settle down a bit.

There was a sound from the floor, so Pang Qian pulled her blanket away from her eyes and secretly looked over. She was very surprised because Gu Mingxi had really pushed off his blankets and was sitting up.

Pang Shuisheng's pajamas were both thick and velvet-y. He couldn't sleep when he was wearing them, so after the lights were turned off, Gu Mingxi quietly took off the pajamas, leaving only his boxers on.

He sat on top of his bedding, the blanket spread over him, in the dark room. Pang Qian could see his naked body, and though it was only the outline, she could tell that compared to last summer, Gu Mingxi's body had become much more developed.

His shoulders were broader, his bones were larger. Although he didn't have any bulging muscles, the smooth lines of adolescence were undergoing their final changes before adulthood.

Gu Mingxi kept silent. Then after a long time, he let out a deep breath. He turned to look at Pang Qian, and she immediately pulled her blanket back over her head.

Gu Mingxi laughed, a light laughter. With a voice as clear as spring, he said, "When you apologize, you should be a bit sincere. Why are you hiding?"

Pang Qian flattened her lips and pulled her covers down. She didn't sit up, but just wriggled around on her bed. Her arms were crossed under her chin as she lied in bed watching him.

This way, their eye levels were about even, though Gu Mingxi was still a bit taller. He smiled faintly at Pang Qian, shining eyes that could consume someone's soul.

Then he leaned forward so that his forehead touched with Pang Qian's for a moment. Just a moment, then he moved back. Pang Qian's face suddenly started



burning. She looked at him distractedly, and heard him say clearly:

“Okay, I accept your apology. I forgive you.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 38

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 38 Early Years of the Injury

*If you don't feed yourself, just wait until you starve. We're not going to feed you.*

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When the sun shined through Pang Qian's window, Gu Mingxi was already awake.

He had a lot of matters on his mind and he was in a strange room, so naturally, he didn't sleep well. He wriggled out from his blanket and looked at the clock on Pang Qian's headboard. It was only 6 o'clock. The girl in bed was wrapped up in her covers, sleeping soundly with a light snoring sound. She slept with her back facing Gu Mingxi, so he could only see her black hair spread out on her pillow.

It was cold out, and they were on a school break. Gu Mingxi knew that Pang Qian liked to stay in bed, so he didn't want to wake her up. He picked up his pajamas and flung them onto his shoulder. Then, carrying his back scratcher between his cheek and shoulder, he left the room.

Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua didn't appear to be awake either yet. Gu Mingxi went into the bathroom, locked the door, and slowly started his daily routine.

With only a pair of boxers on, he was freezing cold. But he still had to take care of his physiological needs.

Normally, this was how Gu Mingxi used the restroom when he woke up as well. He carried in his back scratcher between his shoulder and head. With some maneuvering, even while he was still groggy, he was able to use his back scratcher to pull open his underpants and support his birdie to pee.

For others, it might be a very difficult task, but he was already an expert at it. After all, it had already been ten years since his amputation. Gu Mingxi was



already very used to doing things in all sorts of odd manners.

But this time, he was met with a problem. Because he was wearing boxers, the opening was close to his thigh, which made it hard to pull open.

Gu Mingxi never got irritated about these kinds of things though. He would just try to patiently pull it open a few times, and when he couldn't, he decided to just take off the underpants to pee, like he'd done the night before.

Taking the underpants off was a laborious task. They were short, so they were hard to simply pull down. Pang Qian's bathroom didn't have any assisting tools installed on their walls either. So Gu Mingxi could only lift his foot as far as he could, bend his foot with the bottom facing his thigh, and try to pull at the bottom of the boxers.

He stood on one leg in the bathroom, hopping up and down. His body kept swaying, and it took him 10 minutes to pull the boxers down. His foot ached a little afterwards too.

After he finished peeing, Gu Mingxi stood still and rested for a moment. Then he used his back scratcher to help pull the boxers back up. Fortunately, compared to taking them off, it was much easier to put them on.

While he wasn't wearing his pajamas, Gu Mingxi decided to wash his face and brush his teeth. Although he was cold without his clothes on, it was much easier to do things.

When he brushed his teeth, he lifted his head to look at himself in the mirror. After a night's sleep, his hair had become a mess. There was toothpaste foam in his mouth, and a little had gotten on his cheek. He tilted his head and wiped it off with his shoulder.

His gaze fixed onto his shoulders. At his left and right shoulders, at the armpit area, there were still scars from his amputation. The stitched up skin that wrapped around the broken bones.

Li Han had whispered to him numerous times, that if they had been able to leave Gu Mingxi with a bit of his upper arm, even if it were just 10 or 20 cm, it would have been a big help to his daily life. But reality was really too cruel. Gu Mingxi's arms were cut off at the root, not even leaving behind a stump.



He had long ago forgotten what it was like to have arms. When he saw others using their arms and hands to pick up things, to do things, Gu Mingxi didn't really grasp the idea. Seeing those same things, his first reaction was to reach out his foot. His toes were slender, flexible, and strong. Although he couldn't control them however he wanted, and they couldn't be compared to having fingers, but Gu Mingxi still really liked and had faith in his two feet.

He put his toothbrush down and picked up his cup of water to rinse. The sound of footsteps came from outside the bathroom door, and then a bang. The person outside the bathroom discovered that there was already someone inside and started hitting the door. "Who's inside? Mom, is it you? Open the door and let me pee. It's really urgent!"

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Gu Mingxi spit out the water in his mouth. "Pang Pang, it's me. I'll be done soon, just wait a second."

Hearing Gu Mingxi's voice, Pang Qian was immediately silenced. Then she said, "Hurry up. Call me when you're done."

Gu Mingxi quickly finished rinsing. With his right foot, he wet a face towel and wiped off his face. Since he was standing on one leg, there was no way for him to wring out his towel. He didn't care and just started putting on his clothes with a wet face.

Pang Qian didn't hurry him, but Gu Mingxi felt a bit anxious anyway. He wanted to put his clothes on quickly, but the more he rushed, the more anxious he got, and the slower he ended up being. He was afraid Pang Qian wouldn't be able to wait, so after randomly putting on his clothes, he opened the door. Pang Qian was there, and after looking at him, let out a laugh. "Gu Mingxi, how can you put your clothes on like that?"

Gu Mingxi knew that he looked a mess, and he wanted to go back to the room to tidy himself, but Pang Qian stopped him.

She carefully helped him adjust his clothes, straightening the shoulders on his shirt, and turning his pants slightly. Gu Mingxi's face started getting red. Pang Qian lifted her head and looked at him with a bright smile, "Gu Mingxi, good morning!"



Because Gu Mingxi was there, Pang Qian didn't stay in bed all day. After using the toilet, she quickly washed up. Not long after, Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua both got up. Jin Ai'hua was washing clothes and Pang Shuisheng was cooking breakfast. Then the four of them sat together around the table, eating meat and vegetable wontons with pickled vegetable pancakes.

"Mingxi has always liked my pickled veggie pancakes, right?" Pang Shuisheng was in a very good mood. "Since you live far away now, there won't be many chances in the future. So take advantage of these few days to eat a lot."

Gu Mingxi's lips twisted and he smiled.

Pang Qian's family felt completely different to his own. Pang Shuisheng as an old, uncultured man. He spoke with a booming voice, he was warmhearted with a sense of justice. Jin Ai'hua looked very tough, but she was actually very soft-hearted. Together, they raised Pang Qian. Thick-skinned, and somewhat careless, like Pang Shuisheng. Overbearing, aggressive, but kind and honest, like Li Han.

When they sat around the table for a meal, it was full of laughter. Pang Shuisheng would give his daughter some puff snacks (like shrimp chips or something), and Jin Ai'hua would scold her for eating unhealthily. But Pang Qian would just whine ("cutely").

In Gu Mingxi's memories, after his amputation, he never whined like that in front of his father. Gu Guoxiang was always very strict with him, especially right after he'd gotten injured and was just starting to use his feet to do things. Gu Guoxiang could even be called cruel or harsh.

At the time, Gu Mingxi spent half a month and a half in the hospital before he was discharged. It was only then that Gu Guoxiang, who was studying in the faraway France, finally took a leave to pay visit to his son.

Seeing his crippled son, Gu Guoxiang acted as if he were struck by lightning. For a long time, he didn't say anything. Then, he spent the whole night smoking on the balcony.

After Gu Mingxi could leave his bed, he realized a lot of things had changed.

He couldn't even walk anymore. When he walked, he didn't go straight. He



always went off to the side. After a few steps, he either hit a wall or fell to the ground.

He couldn't sit up properly either. He would sit in his chair and then suddenly fall over onto the ground, and no matter what he did, he couldn't get up again.

He couldn't eat on his own, dress himself, brush his teeth or wash his face, use the toilet or take a shower. All of this generated a great fear inside his mind. Without his parents, he was completely unable to do anything.

Couldn't play with his toys, couldn't draw, couldn't write, couldn't take any food to eat...

He started having temper tantrums. Every day, he would cry and whine about getting robotic arms. When he had to study, he would use his head to push everything onto the floor. When Li Han fed him some food, he would spit it all out. He cried all night long, until his voice disappeared... Then finally, he just became silent, sitting at home every day, in a trance.

The next time Gu Mingxi refused to eat, Gu Guoxiang walked over and took the bowl from Li Han's hands. He said, "If he doesn't want to eat, then fine. When he gets hungry, let's see what he'll do."

Gu Mingxi was also very stubborn, so for one day and night, he didn't eat. Li Han was distressed to tears, but Gu Guoxiang didn't let her feed Gu Mingxi anything.

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The morning after that, when Gu Guoxiang and Li Han were eating breakfast, Gu Mingxi stumbled to their side. He looked at the congee (rice porridge) on the table, mouth watering.

Gu Guoxiang brought a chair over for him, and placed a bowl down on the tea table. He also left a spoon. "If you want to eat, feed yourself."

Gu Mingxi just stared at him, as Li Han said, "Guoxiang..."

"Are you going to feed him for the rest of his life?" Gu Guoxiang looked out indifferently from behind his glasses. Towards the 6 year old Gu Mingxi, he remained hard-hearted. He said, "I don't care how you do it, but you have to finish this bowl."



That was the first time that Gu Mingxi fed himself after he lost his arms.

He didn't use his feet to pick up the spoon. He couldn't, and he hadn't thought of it. He sat in front of the tea table and stuck his face towards the bowl of congee. He was so hungry, he didn't care about anything else. With his tongue extended, he started licking and slurping at the congee. After he finished eating the top layer, he continued slurping another. When he got to the bottom of the bowl, he couldn't lick anymore, so he desperately bit the edge of the bowl and tilted his head back. Unsurprisingly, the bowl fell and the congee spilled all over him.

Gu Mingxi signaled to Li Han to help him clean up. His young son kept crying, but Gu Guoxiang only filled a new bowl of congee for him. "Mingxi, try to use your foot to feed yourself."

That was the start of Gu Mingxi's life of using his feet.

There was a very common scene that occurred in that month. Gu Mingxi would sit there, quietly weeping, with a spoon tucked into his toes, as he fed himself congee. His toes were small and short, so it was hard to grasp onto the spoon. The congee often spilled all around.

He would knock over his bowl and toss away the spoon. Whenever he couldn't eat, Gu Guoxiang only said, "If you don't feed yourself, just wait until you starve. We're not going to feed you."

The young Gu Mingxi didn't know why his parents were so fierce to him. He also wanted to eat properly, but he didn't have any arms. Don't people all eat with their hands? If he didn't have any, why did he have to eat with his feet?

Gu Guoxiang was home for a month, and Gu Mingxi cried for a month. He cried and cried. Then he learned to use his feet to eat. And then he learned how to use his feet to do a lot of things.

He practiced stretching. He sat on the floor, as Li Han pushed his body down close to his legs. 10 minutes, 20 minutes, half an hour... Gu Mingxi was soaked in a cold sweat, his teeth clenched. But he didn't cry again.

From the side, Gu Guoxiang checked his watch. "Time's up. You can rest now."

Gu Mingxi felt that, although those years were tough, although his dad was



very fierce, although his mom kept crying, those were very fine years. Because the three of them were together.

Maybe they would never have that chance again.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 39

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 39 Son & Daughter (A Complete Set)

*Be careful with the needle in my neck!*

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There wasn't much sunlight in the wintertime, so Gu Mingxi's clothes still weren't dry. He also didn't fit Pang Shuisheng's clothes, so he just decided to stay in Pang Qian's house and not go out.

From the morning, Gu Mingxi felt a bit dizzy, and his throat was dry and itchy. When they ate lunch, he didn't have much of an appetite. His whole person looked sickly, as if his spirit were gone.

Pang Shuisheng sat at the table, opposite him, and asked, "Mingxi, are you feeling unwell?"

Gu Mingxi lifted his head, his eyes a bit hazy, "Ah?"

Pang Qian already lifted her hand to his forehead. Surprised, she said, "Gu Mingxi, you have a fever!"

A day ago, Gu Mingxi had walked a very long way in the rain, and he'd worn his cold, soaked clothes for a long time. After the night, he finally caught a cold and got a fever. He was even coughing.

After they ate, Pang Shuisheng had Gu Mingxi take a nap. Sleep more, drink more water, take a bit of fever medicine. If his fever didn't disappear by evening, they'd have to go to the hospital.

The bedding on Pang Qian's floor was already cleaned up. Gu Mingxi was a bit apologetic about sleeping in Pang Qian's bed, but she didn't care at all. She just pushed him onto the bed.

She brought over a cup of warm water and a tablet of medicine. "Open your



mouth.”

Gu Mingxi obediently opened his mouth and took the medicine. Then he drank some water from Pang Qian’s hands. Pang Qian pulled the covers up over his body and then took his temperature with a thermometer.

While Gu Mingxi waited with the thermometer in his mouth, Pang Qian sat with elbows on her legs, resting her chin in her hands, staring at him. Gu Mingxi felt rather uncomfortable being watched by her, so he asked vaguely, “What are you looking at?”

“Your complexion is really bad.” Pang Qian frowned, and said unhappily, “It’ll be bad if you get sick. Every time you’re sick, it lasts forever. Tonight, you sleep on the bed. I’ll sleep on the floor.”

Since they were young, Gu Mingxi actually rarely got sick. Even after his amputation, his immune system was still pretty good. But rarely getting sick doesn’t mean never getting getting sick. Whenever he did get sick, his fever would last for a long time. As his deskmate of many years, Pang Qian understood him very well. That’s why she was very afraid that he’d gotten sick.

Hearing Pang Qian’s words, Gu Mingxi shook his head. “No, that won’t do. This has nothing to do with where I sleep. It’s because I got drenched in rain yesterday.”

“If where you sleep doesn’t matter, then there’s no problem with me sleeping on the floor either.”

He coughed a few times, and said, “No, you’re a girl.”

“You’re sick.” Pang Qian reached out her hand to feel his forehead again. “You can’t feel it yourself, but do you know how high your temperature is right now?”

Supposing it was time, Pang Qian pulled the thermometer from Gu Mingxi’s mouth. She looked at it and then placed it in front of his face, “38.8. See?”

“It’s not that high.” Gu Mingxi smiled at her. “It didn’t even break 39. You’re making a big deal about nothing.”

“Your brain’s been fried.” Pang Qian pouted. She wet a towel with cold water, then wrung it out before putting it onto Gu Mingxi’s forehead. He frowned and



said, "It's cold!"

"Whenever I have a fever, this is what my mom does to help cool me down." Pang Qian sat down next to him and said, "I'm the one who brought to to my house. When your mom comes back and finds out that you're sick, I would feel really bad about it."

Gu Mingxi glanced at her, "I'm the one who asked for your help."

Pang Qian looked at him, "Oh, that's right." She smiled and then said, "I lied to my mom and now even I'm believing those words."

Gu Mingxi took some medicine and then went to sleep. Pang Qian sat at her desk, reading comics. Then she noticed Gu Mingxi's practice exam book.

Pang Qian put down her comic and picked up the exam book, flipping through the pages. A thought suddenly popped into Pang Qian's mind. Gu Mingxi said that these questions would be very hard for her. This set off Pang Qian's competitiveness. She wanted to try it out.

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It was a long afternoon, and she wasn't doing anything else. She picked a blank test page and started working quietly.

Every so often, Gu Mingxi would cough a bit. He didn't sleep very peacefully and kept tossing and turning. When he started coughing very badly, Pang Qian sat beside him, lightly patting at his back. When his furrowed brows loosened up, Pang Qian went back to her desk to work on the test.

After using who knows how many sheets of scratch paper, Pang Qian finally admitted that the questions were indeed difficult. She finished the questions and let out a deep breath, but couldn't gather the courage to check the answers.

When she checked the time, she realized three hours had already passed. Pang Qian sat next to Gu Mingxi and looked at him. His complexion was very poor. It wasn't really red or white, but should be considered blue. His lips were pursed, his brows furrowed. Pang Qian took the towel from his forehead and touched her palm to his face. It was still very hot.

She ran out to find Pang Shuisheng, "Dad, Gu Mingxi still has a fever. What do we do?"



Pang Shuisheng thought for a moment, then said, “We’ll take his temperature again when he wakes up. If it hasn’t gone down, then we’ll take him to the hospital.”

Gu Mingxi woke up, he felt horrible. He hazily opened his eyes and found that Pang Qian was sitting next to him. When she saw that he’d woken up, she asked, “Gu Mingxi, how do you feel?”

Gu Mingxi licked his lips, his throat felt like it was burning. His voice sounded very hoarse when he spoke, “Pang Pang, I’m thirsty.”

Pang Qian rushed to get him a glass of water. She held his back to help him up, and then held the cup to his lips for him to drink. He finished the glass in one gulp. He lifted his eyes to look at Pang Qian, black and shining, just like a poor little puppy.

Pang Qian pulled out the thermometer. “Gu Mingxi, open up.”

After three minutes, Pang Qian read the temperature, “39.2!”

Gu Mingxi said weakly, “Finally broke 39.”

“You’re pleased with yourself, aren’t you!” Pang Qian stood up, her face very serious. “Gu Mingxi, change your clothes. My dad said he’d take you to the hospital.”

Gu Mingxi really didn’t want to bring trouble to Pang Qian’s parents. It was New Year’s, and he ran over to their house. Then he stayed there, eating, drinking, sleeping. He already felt very apologetic about it. And now, he’d even gotten sick and had to be taken to the hospital. He told Pang Shuisheng several times that he was fine, that he’d be better after he slept. But Pang Shuisheng didn’t agree to that.

Jin Ai’hua stayed at home to make dinner. Pang Shuisheng called a taxi and took Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian to the hospital. Gu Mingxi had a blood test and he had inflammation. The doctor gave him an IV to prevent him from catching pneumonia.

The young nurse went to insert the IV, and was dumbfounded after seeing Gu Mingxi. The middle-aged nurse at the side said, “Insert it at the neck or the leg. Ask the patient which they prefer.”



Gu Mingxi said, "Neck."

When the nurse was inserting the needle, Pang Qian didn't dare watch. She stood next to Gu Mingxi, and his head was turned toward her. He said quietly, "Don't be afraid. It doesn't hurt."

He had several bags of medicine, and it was probably going to take three hours. Pang Shuisheng stayed in the infusion room with Gu Mingxi. He found a seat and sat for awhile. Then he said to Pang Qian, "Qian Qian, you stay with Mingxi. I'll go home to make Mingxi some congee, and I'll bring dinner over soon. The IV won't finish until about 8 o'clock. You guys have to eat."

Gu Mingxi really felt very apologetic. He couldn't stop himself from saying, "Uncle..."

Pang Shuisheng stopped him and continued, "Just make sure to rest. If you need anything, just call Pang Qian over to help. I'll be back in an hour."

After Pang Shuisheng left the hospital, he lit a cigarette. Then he made a call to Gu Guoxiang. "Guoxiang, where are you? Hurry back. Mingxi's sick."

Gu Guoxiang asked, "What happened?"

"Yesterday, it was raining. The kid walked outside for a long time, so he was drenched. Today, he got a fever and keeps coughing."

Gu Guoxiang was silent on the other end of the phone. Then he said, "I'm out of town. My ticket back is for the day after tomorrow."

"Then exchange it. Can't you change it for tomorrow?"

"Probably not." Gu Guoxiang's voice was low. "Shuisheng, I'm not alone."

On his end of the phone, there was the faint sound of a TV. Then a female voice said, "Who's calling? You're out to play over New Year's, and you're still so busy..."

Gu Guoxiang covered the receiver and said, "Be quiet."

Pang Shuisheng heard everything, and really had some curses he wanted to shout out. But he held back his temper. "What about Ah Han? Call her! Tell her that Mingxi's sick, and she'll surely come back."



“I’ve tried calling her, but her cellphone is off.”

“Call her home phone then. You must have the number to her parent’s home.”

“...” Gu Guoxiang sighed. “I really don’t have it. All these years, and we’ve probably only been back two or three times.”

Pang Shuisheng really had no words to say. Before he hung up, he shouted, “Fucker, damn it! If you don’t want your kid, I’ll raise him!”

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It was New Year’s, so there weren’t many people in the infusion room at the hospital. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian sat together in the corner. When they looked up, they could see the TV hanging on the wall.

Gu Mingxi was still wearing the pajamas, his body covered with a blanket they’d brought from home. Pang Qian pulled the blanket up a bit, so that others wouldn’t notice his missing arms.

Truth be told, since it was the first time Pang Qian had gone to the hospital with Gu Mingxi for an IV drip. She didn’t really know what she needed to watch out for. When Gu Mingxi looked up and saw that the medicine solution was nearly done, he reminded Pang Qian to find a nurse to change it out.

Gu Mingxi was feeling weak so he didn’t speak much. Every time he looked over at Pang Qian, he could see her with her chin resting on her palms, staring at him.

“I know that I’m handsome.” His mouth turned up and he smiled, “But you don’t have to look at me like that.”

“Narcissist!” Pang Qian flew into a rage. She was about to hit him, when Gu Mingxi pleaded, “Please be careful with the needle in my neck!”

Pang Qian immediately dropped her hand. She pursed her lips and said, “You’re sick and still asking for a beating.”

Gu Mingxi laughed as he looked at her. “You’re the only one that would hit me. In all of the Golden Compound, who doesn’t know that I grew up being bullied by you.”

“Nonsense!” Pang Qian suddenly wanted to hit him again, but so sickly, she



put her hand down. “When did I bully you?! How can that be considered bullying?! My dad even told me yesterday not to bully you. What the heck!”

Seeing that Pang Qian had really gotten a bit angry, Gu Mingxi smiled and said, “I’m just kidding with you.”

Qian Qian didn’t say anything, and then she felt something on her leg. She looked down and there was Gu Mingxi’s foot. He wasn’t wearing any socks, and his toes pulled at her pants. “Hey, I really was just kidding. Don’t be mad.”

Pang Qian turned to look at him. Gu Mingxi kept smiling, “Then, if you hit me, it’ll be fine, won’t it?”

“You’re crazy.” Pang Qian kicked his leg, and the two of them both snickered.

Pang Shuisheng brought in a thermos of food. There was congee and also some *rousong* (“dried meat floss”) and pickled mustard greens.

Since it wasn’t convenient for Gu Mingxi to eat, Pang Shuisheng was going to feed him, but Pang Qian said, “Dad, let me.”

She sat beside him with a bowl of congee, feeding him spoon after spoon. Occasionally, she would also help him wipe his mouth with a napkin.

After another few spoonfuls, Pang Qian couldn’t help say, “When we were in first grade, I fed you. I really didn’t think that I’d still be feeding you in high school.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her gloomily, then he lowered his eyes.

The old auntie sitting beside them was also getting an IV drip. Her two daughters were with her. They’d seen Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi (playfully) quarreling earlier, and now the girl was feeding the boy. Although they weren’t sure why this grown boy couldn’t feed himself, but he was a sick patient after all. It wasn’t particularly strange.

One of the auntie’s daughters started chatting with Pang Shuisheng. “Mister, are both of those kids yours?”

Pang Shuisheng laughed, “That’s right, they’re both mine. One son, one daughter.”

“They’re siblings?”



“That’s right.”

“A son and daughter, a complete set. It’s really something to be envied. They’re both very pretty. I’ve been watching the two of them, and they seem to get along very well.”

Hearing this, Pang Qian lifted her eyes to look at Gu Mingxi. She found that his cheeks were flushed and he was secretly watching her.

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# Chapter 40

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 40 That Dummie

*Gu Mingxi, why do you keep asking me about Xie Yi?*

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After Gu Mingxi's IV finished, Pang Shuisheng took the two kids home. By the time they got back, it was already 9 PM.

Jin Ai'hua let them into the house. She said to Pang Qian, "Qian Qian, when you were at the hospital, there was a boy that called. I said that you'd gone out, so he said for you to call him when you get back."

Pang Qian asked, "Who was it?"

"His last name is Xie. He said you had his home phone. He's on the ping pong team."

"Oh, Xie Yi!" Pang Qian changed her shoes and ran over to the phone in the living room. She didn't take note of Gu Mingxi's gloomy look.

While Pang Qian was on the phone with Xie Yi, her face was shining brightly. With the phone next to her ear, she spoke quickly and lowered her voice a bit. Gu Mingxi sat in her room for awhile, then he came out and looked at her. It seemed like Pang Qian was worried that he'd hear what she and Xie Yi were talking about, and she even turned away. Finally, she said happily, "Oh, I know. Xie Yi, bye."

After she hung up, she turned back and made a face at Gu Mingxi. "Why are you eavesdropping?!"

"When was I eavesdropping. I... I came out to get some water." Gu Mingxi pretended to look around, then followed Pang Qian to her room.

Pang Qian looked over the medicine from the hospital, and picked out the two



kinds that he had to take that evening. This was the task that Pang Shuisheng gave to her. He said that Pang Qian was in charge of Gu Mingxi's medicine-taking.

Gu Mingxi sat down next to Pang Qian. He coughed a few times and then asked, "Why was Xie Yi looking for you?"

"He invited me out to play ping pong. He said that the gym would be open tomorrow, so the team would be practicing." Pang Qian was still looking over the medicine kit. "Oh my god, you have to take four kinds of medicine? You're going to become a medicine pot."

Gu Mingxi rushed to ask, "Are you going?"

Pang Qian answered, "I told him I wasn't sure. Then he said that school was starting soon, so the team wanted to practice a bit. [He said] that after the New Year's celebrations, we must have all gotten fat, so it was a good opportunity to exercise."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then continued to ask, "You and Xie Yi both know each other's phone numbers?"

"Mm, I used to sit in front of him in class." Pang Qian turned to look at Gu Mingxi. "I know Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song's numbers too. Don't you know?"

"..." Gu Mingxi didn't answer, but instead asked, "Do you often call Xie Yi?"

Pang Qian was finally curious, "Gu Mingxi, why do you keep asking me about Xie Yi?"

Gu Mingxi's face turned red. Then he coughed. "...I-I'm not always asking!"

"You did, you kept asking." Pang Qian helped him pat his back. Then she opened the medicine case and pulled out a capsule. "Why are you still coughing so much? I'll go get you some water. After you take your medicine, you should go to sleep."

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That evening, none of Pang Shuisheng's family of three agreed to let Gu Mingxi sleep on the floor again. In order to watch after Gu Mingxi, Jin Ai'hua still put out



the floor bedding in Pang Qian's room. Gu Mingxi had sweat a lot and his whole body was sticky, but he didn't have the strength to bathe himself, so he could only ask Pang Shuisheng for help.

After he cleaned up, Gu Mingxi returned to Pang Qian's room, and found that she'd already crawled into the bedding on the floor.

He walked over to her and gave her a kick. Pang Qian didn't respond, so Gu Mingxi could only walk over and climb into the bed.

Pang Qian popped her head out to look at him. With her hands on the edge of the bed, she said, "You should sleep earlier. If you need to drink something at night, just give me a call. If you want to go to the bathroom, call me, and I'll get my dad. Also, if you're feeling unwell, you have to call me. The doctor was worried that you'd get pneumonia."

Gu Mingxi looked at her silently.

Pang Qian smiled at him, then said, "Also, if you want to cough, just cough. Don't worry that it'll bother me. Holding in a cough is bad, really."

Gu Mingxi pursed his lips. Pang Qian was about to go to sleep, when she heard him ask, "What time did Xie Yi say to meet up tomorrow?"

Pang Qian flipped over and then sat up again, "2 in the afternoon."

He asked, "Are you going?"

"I already told you. I'm not sure yet. We still have to go to the hospital tomorrow for your IV drip."

"Then, do you want to go to play?"

Pang Qian stretched her arms out. "To be honest, I do want to go. A few days ago, we went to my grandparents' houses, and I ate a lot. I've gotten fatter. I really should exercise a bit."

Gu Mingxi said, "I don't think you're fat."

"That's what you think." Pang Qian suddenly thought of something. She crawled out from her bedding and left the room. When she came back, she was carrying a thermometer. She waved it back and forth and said, "Gu Mingxi, open up. I'll take your temperature again."



Gu Mingxi held the thermometer in his mouth, quietly lying on the bed. Pang Qian didn't let him sleep without his clothes on. She went to get a long sleeved shirt that Pang Shuisheng didn't wear much for him.

The clothes were for older men, so it didn't really fit him. The shoulders were a bit tight, the waist a bit loose. The shirt sat loosely on Gu Mingxi's body, the empty sleeves hanging on the sides. Gu Mingxi looked at the sleeve cuffs. There was nothing there at all. He let out a sigh. He said a bit ambiguously, "Go practice with Xie Yi tomorrow. I can go to the hospital on my own."

"That won't do," Pang Qian said. "My parents are both working tomorrow. I promised my dad that I'd go to the hospital with you tomorrow."

"Then we can go together after you finish playing." Gu Mingxi smiled. "Speaking of, how's the paddle that I gave you?"

"Ah! It's great!" Pang Qian went to her cabinet to pull it out as she spoke. She put the paddle into its case and said, "In the past, I couldn't beat Zheng Qiaoqiao at all. But with this paddle, our playing is at least even."

Gu Mingxi smiled, "It's good that you like it."

"It's time." Pang Qian pulled out the thermometer from his mouth and looked at it. With a smile, "38.7, it's gone down!"

Pang Qian was usually a very heavy sleeper, but that night, she climbed out of her covers, enduring the cold. She turned on her lamp and felt Gu Mingxi's forehead. His body was still very hot, and his complexion was also still rather poor. Pang Qian knew that he must be having a hard time, but there was nothing to be done.

Maybe it was because of the light, Gu Mingxi squinted open his eyes a bit. Afraid of waking him entirely, Pang Qian immediately turned off the light, and knelt beside the bed quietly.

Gu Mingxi made an "mn" sound, and after some difficulty, turned to face the wall. He was sleeping soundly again soon after.

Because he was turning, his blanket was pushed off slightly. Since he had no way of adjusting it himself, Pang Qian helped him readjust it. Quietly, she spoke, "Get better soon, dummie."



The next day, the New Year's break was over, so the adults went back to work. Only Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi remained at home. The two of them stayed in the master bedroom watching TV. Gu Mingxi was a bit drowsy, and he had a fever, so he wasn't really in the mind to work on homework.

When it was time for lunch, Pang Qian warmed up the food that Pang Shuisheng had prepared for them. In the morning, he'd also made some congee for Gu Mingxi. He ate a bit of plain congee and vegetables, his appetite slightly better.

After they ate, Pang Qian washed their bowls. Gu Mingxi said to her, "I want to take a nap. You go ahead and go to practice."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, then asked, "Will you be okay by yourself?"  
"Yeah."

"I'll probably be back by 3," Pang Qian said. "I'm riding my bike, so I'll be really fast. When I get back, I'll go with you to the hospital for your IV."

"There's no need to rush. Riding your bike too fast is dangerous." Gu Mingxi smiled, "Pang Pang, just make sure you have fun. Don't worry about me."

Pang Qian looked at him, thought it was a bit odd, but didn't linger on it. "Okay, make sure you take your medicine later. I'll be back soon. The coach is coming today too, so Xie Yi said it wouldn't be very good if we don't show up."

Gu Mingxi nodded, "I understand."

Pang Qian smiled, and stood on her toes to rub Gu Mingxi's head. "Be good and sleep. Wait for me to come back."

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It was 1 in the afternoon. After she watched Gu Mingxi get into bed, Pang Qian walked out with her paddle. She rode her bike to the school gym. A lot of the team members were already there.

Pang Qian saw Xie Yi and Zheng Qiaoqiao. They all greeted each other, "Happy new year."

It was the first practice of the new year, so the coach had everyone warm up by jogging and practicing in pairs.



Pang Qian's mind was clearly not at the practice. She couldn't even receive the very straightforward serve that Zheng Qiaoqiao sent her. From the side, Xie Yi asked, "Crab, what's the matter? You didn't practice all month? You can't even receive a serve."

Pang Qian gave a slight apologetic look to Zheng Qiaoqiao, who was picking up the ball. She ran over to Xie Yi and asked, "When will we be finished? It's already been an hour, and I still have something else to do."

Xie Yi said, "If you have something else, you can leave first. It's not a bit deal."

"Really? The coach won't say anything?"

"Of course not. It's still vacation after all. Didn't you notice, there are a bunch of members who aren't here." Xie Yi laughed, "What, you have a date?"

"Of course not. I..." She didn't want to mention that Gu Mingxi was waiting for her at home, so she waved her paddle in the air. "Then Xie Yi, let the coach know that I left first. I have a pressing matter."

Xie Yi smiled, "Okay, go on then."

Behind her, Xie called out to Zheng Qiaoqiao, who'd just been stood up, "Come on, Zheng Qiaoqiao. I'll practice with you."

Pang Qian rode her bike and nearly flew home. She ran up the stairs, a suspicious feeling creeping up on her.

"Gu Mingxi!" she shouted.

No one responded, so Pang Qian ran into her room. Her bed was neatly made up, and there was no one there.

She ran over to the master bedroom and the bathroom, "Gu Mingxi!"

She went back to the living room and looked around. "Gu Mingxi!"

Soon, she realized that Gu Mingxi wasn't home.

She looked for Gu Mingxi's backpack. Gone. But his clothes were still there, minus a shirt and a pair of pants. Pang Qian looked for the medicine from the hospital. It was also gone.

She grabbed her keys and ran out the door.



She rode her bike quickly to the hospital, and then went directly to the transfusion room. With just a glance, she saw the lonely figure sitting in the corner.

He was wearing his brown coat and grey pants. His head leaned against the transfusion chair, his big backpack next to his legs.

It was winter, but he wasn't wearing socks or shoes, just a pair of flip flops. The IV bag hung in the air, the tube hanging down to the needle in his neck.

Pang Qian was panting as she walked over to his side. She looked down at him from the side. Gu Mingxi was actually not wearing a sweater, and who knew if he had on any thermal underpants. His empty sleeves were tucked into the armrest of the chair. His face was pale, his eyes closed. Every once in awhile, he would cough a bit.

In that moment, all of Pang Qian's anger vanished. She didn't wake him, but instead, she sat down in a chair beside him. She lifted her head to look at his medicine bag, quietly waiting for him to wake up.

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# Chapter 41

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 41 Do You Mind

*I'm. Getting. Angry. Again!*

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Gu Mingxi's IV drip was nearly finished. Pang Qian was about to call someone over, when a young nurse walked over. As she was changing Gu Mingxi's medicine, she realized that Pang Qian was sitting right there. "Are you this student's friend?"

"Yeah, I am." Pang Qian nodded her head. The nurse said, "I say, how can this student come for his IV alone? And it's so cold out, but he came wearing flip flops. Isn't he afraid he'll get more sick?"

She glanced down and smiled. "Oh, you're awake. Yeah, I was talking about you."

Pang Qian looked over. Gu Mingxi had already opened his eyes. Lying in the infusion chair, he turned his head to look at her.

After the nurse left, Pang Qian sat up and stared at Gu Mingxi's bare feet. She kept staring, and then reached out her hand to grab his foot. Good thing that the infusion room had heating, so his foot wasn't much colder than normal.

Gu Mingxi withdrew his feet from her hold. "Why did you come?"

"Why do you think? Pang Qian was angry again. "What do you mean by this, Gu Mingxi? Didn't we agree that you'd wait until I came back, and I'd come to the hospital with you? I didn't come back late either. I got home at 3:30! Why did you run off to the hospital on your own?"

As she spoke, she started tugging at Gu Mingxi's shirt. He only had on one cotton sweater. Then she tried to pull his pants, but Gu Mingxi wouldn't let her. "Don't look, I'm not wearing the cotton pants underneath, okay! I'm not cold!"



“Not cold?!” Pang Qian huffed. “You’re only wearing one sweater. You have a fever and you’re coughing, don’t you know! If my dad finds out, he’ll definitely scold me! And you’re not wearing shoes! Why aren’t you wearing shoes?! You think it’s summer time right now! I know that you need your toes to do things, but couldn’t you have just waited for me to come home? You don’t have arms! How can you just go to the hospital by yourself! I was nearly scared to death, do you know!”

“I left you a note.” Gu Mingxi bit his lip. Looking at Pang Qian seriously, he said, “I left it on your desk. Didn’t you see it?”

Pang Qian stopped for a moment. She hadn’t even thought that Gu Mingxi would leave a note.

With lowered eyes, Gu Mingxi continued, “I don’t have arms, but I can still go to the hospital for an IV drip. I admit that not wearing more clothes wasn’t that good, and it’s a bit cold, but the shoes... I used to wear flip flops in the winter all the time, so I’m just used to it. At worst, they’ll just get a bit frostbitten. It’s not the first time.”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi slowly turned to look at her, being careful with the needle in his neck. He looked like he was suffering a bit, as if Pang Qian had bullied him again. He said, “I’ve already brought a lot of trouble to you guys, staying at your house. Auntie had to wash my clothes, Uncle had to cook congee for me. I even took your bed to sleep in. So I didn’t want to stop you from going to play.”

After a pause, he said, “Pang Pang, I always thought that you didn’t mind that I didn’t have arms.”

Pang Qian gaped at him.

Gu Mingxi smiled and continued, “But it seems like...you’re like everyone else, concerned about it.”

Before, Pang Qian had a lot of words to say. But after hearing Gu Mingxi’s words, she suddenly found herself without the strength, unsure of how to explain it.

She really wanted to tell him that she didn’t mind that he didn’t have arms, but



he was sick right now. When you're sick, isn't it a matter of course that there's someone there to help you? She was very willing to help, she didn't mind at all. She was angry because he was acting under an "act now, deal with it later" attitude, not because he didn't have arms and needed someone to help him.

When Gu Mingxi's IV drip was done, it was already 6 o'clock. Pang Qian helped him tidy his things and carried his backpack for him, and then they walked out together. When they passed by the reception desk of the hospital, a young nurse waved at him. "You're going? If you come back on your own tomorrow, feel free to call me. I'll be here tomorrow."

Gu Mingxi smiled and nodded to her, "Mm, thank you."

When they got outside, Pang Qian asked, "You know that nurse?"

"Not really. When I came in, I explained my situation to her, and she helped me a bit in the transfusion room." Gu Mingxi smiled at Pang Qian. "Actually, there are a lot of nice people outside [in the world]. When I need help, most people are willing to help, so I'm not at all scared of going out by myself."

"Alright, that's enough. I'll come with you tomorrow." Pang Qian's expression soured. "Gu Mingxi, you definitely have some kind of problem. You're rather have strangers help you than let me help you? What's my relationship with you?! I! I! How many years have I spent with you?!"

She didn't know where this burst of anger came from either. When she got to the end of her tirade, her eyes were red.

Pang Qian huffily went over to the bike racks and unlocked her bike. Gu Mingxi followed after her a bit helplessly. "Pang Pang..."

Pang Qian ignored him, standing up straight, walking her bike out the hospital gates. Gu Mingxi walked next to her, occasionally turning to look at her, "Pang Pang, don't be angry."

"Hmph!"

"I know that I wasn't right, but I really left a note."

"You're mentioning the note again?!"

Gu Mingxi curled his lips, "I really left one. You're the one who didn't see it."



“You’re so annoying!” Pang Qian was so angry that she tried to kick him, but Gu Mingxi jumped out of the way.

He laughed, “Alright, I apologize. Don’t be angry.”

Pang Qian stopped in her tracks, then turned to look at him. She spit out two words, “Get. On.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her doubtfully.

“I said, get on the bike. It’s a half hour walk from here back home.” Pang Qian pat the backseat on her bike. “Hurry up, I’ll take you home. My dad’s probably already home, making dinner.”

“No!” Gu Mingxi shook his head, refusing. “You can ride your bike back. I’ll just walk.”

Pang Qian glared at him fiercely, “I’m. Getting. Angry. Again!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“Hmph!” Pang Qian turned back around, tossing her braids. With a huff, “Hmph! Getting on my nerves! Hmph!”

She turned back to look at him once more. Her mouth turned down, she rolled her eyes slowly. “Hmph! No conscience! Hmph!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Five minutes later, Pang Qian brought Gu Mingxi home, riding her bike all the way into the Golden Compound.

It was dusk, and the sky was already dark. The wind was blowing, the street lights were on. Pang Qian rode her bike and was becoming soaked in her sweat. Cold wind blew at them from the front. Gu Mingxi was hidden behind Pang Qian, so he didn’t feel it was cold at all.

Pang Qian could take others around on a bike. All the grown-up kids at the compound could. But giving a ride to Gu Mingxi was a bit more trouble. Pang Qian pedaled on, and the bike swung back and forth a bit. Gu Mingxi sat on the low back seat of her bike, his long legs bent. The people they rode past were greeted with such a surprising sight, and Gu Mingxi’s face turned red as a tomato.



“Gu Mingxi,” the driver girl called. The passenger gave a sound of acknowledgment. The driver girl asked, “Have you ever given me a ride on a bike?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, “Doesn’t seem like it.”

“Have you ever given someone else a ride?”

“No.”

“Do you still have your bike?”

“Yeah, it’s in the parking shed at the new house. I haven’t ridden it in a long time.”

“You should give me a ride.”

“...” Gu Mingxi smiled and answered a bit bashfully, “Okay.”

A while later...

“Pang Pang! Stop!” the passenger called out to the driver girl. The driver girl asked, “What is it?”

The passenger said, slightly vexed, “One of my flip flops fell off!”

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The third night that Gu Mingxi slept at Pang Qian’s house, he still slept on the bed, and Pang Qian slept on the floor. He felt much better that day, so lying in bed, he chatted with Pang Qian.

They talked about when they were younger. Kindergarten, primary school, junior high... Pang Qian talked about Wang Tingting, Zhang Wei, Sun Mingfang, which high schools they were at, how their first semester exams went. Gu Mingxi talked about Jian Zhe, Liu Hanlin, his friends of nine years. When he moved, he also invited the two of them over to visit.

“Wang Tingting is still at Origin of Flight (they had a connecting high school),” Pang Qian said. “She called me over winter break and said that Teacher Cao was pregnant. Aiya, Gu Mingxi, do you know, I really didn’t like Teacher Cao. When my test scores were bad, she didn’t even know who I was. When I did well, she accused me of cheating. When my scores started improving again, she treated me like a precious student. It makes me disgusted when I think about it. What a



snob.”

On the bed, Gu Mingxi responded, “Mm.”

Pang Qian continued, “I still like Teacher Dai more. She’s the best teacher that I’ve ever had, and she’s pretty. When my scores were bad, she never talk to me with an attitude. Hey, what do you think?”

There was no response from the bed.

Pang Qian slowly sat up and kneeled on the floor to look at Gu Mingxi. He was sleeping, his head turned to the side, his eyelashes covering the bottom of his eyes. It was a very serene scene.

Pang Qian looked at him with her chin in her hands. It was without a doubt that Gu Mingxi had a good looking face. In Class 2, a lot of girls called him handsome.

Handsome to what extent?

“If Gu Mingxi had arms, he would definitely be more handsome than Xie Yi,” one girl said.

Pang Qian didn’t understand though, what having arms had to do with being handsome. If having arms made something handsome, then centipedes must be the most handsome things in the world.

So who did Pang Qian think was handsome?

Zheng Qiaoqiao asked her this question. “Crab, do you think Xie Yi or Gu Mingxi is more handsome?”

Pang Qian didn’t even need to think before responding, “Of course it’s Xie Yi.”

The hospital gave Gu Mingxi three days worth of medicine. Pang Qian accompanied him to go for his last IV drip. They two of them took the bus.

On walk from the bus stop back to the Golden Compound, Pang Qian saw a peddler selling candied fruit skewers. She bought one and ate at it slowly. She even graciously let Gu Mingxi eat two pieces.

When they got back to the compound gate, Pang Qian brought the skewer in front of Gu Mingxi and he took a bite of Chinese hawthorn fruit. As he was



chewing, someone called out to him.

“Mingxi.”

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian both lifted their heads. Gu Guoxiang stood at the compound gate, a smoke in one of his hands. Behind him was his black Santana car.

Gu Guoxiang wore a crisp black coat, his hair tidy and neat, a pair of glasses resting on his nose. Although he was middle-aged, he might be able to pass for a 30-something. Tall and towering, with a refined, elegant air.

Pang Qian always thought that Gu Guoxiang was very handsome, and was envious that Gu Mingxi had such a father. Her dad, Pang Shuisheng, was short with a round belly. His hair was course like a scrubbing brush, and because he smoked, his teeth were stained yellow.

But seeing Gu Guoxiang now, Pang Qian didn't think he was handsome at all. She only felt disgust and scorn. She looked at him coldly. Gu Mingxi swallowed the piece of Chinese hawthorn and looked at Gu Guoxiang hesitatingly.

Gu Guoxiang put out his cigarette and said, “Go up and collect your things. I'll take you home.”

Pang Qian boldly asked, “Uncle, you're not coming upstairs?”

“No, Qian Qian. I just came down after talking with your dad already.” Gu Guoxiang smiled, “I got you a present. I left it with your dad. Thank you for taking care of Gu Mingxi these few days.”

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Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walked up the stairs together. As Pang Qian helped him pack up his things, the two of them were both quiet. Gu Mingxi didn't have a lot of stuff. He came with the one backpack and he left with the one backpack. Pang Qian stuffed the medicine from the hospital into his bag and said, “You have to keep taking your medicine. Don't forget it.”

Nod.

“And drink more water, even if it means you need to use the bathroom more often.”



“Mm, I know.”

“Don’t work on your homework too late. Sleep earlier.”

“Mm.”

Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi put his backpack onto his shoulders, and then the two of them walked outside together. Gu Mingxi was sitting on the stool as he put on his shoes, while Pang Qian crouched down on the floor to help him tie his laces. Then she put his flip flops into his bag.

“Don’t wear your flip flops, really. Your feet will get frozen.”

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, “I’m going. Thanks for these few days, Pang Pang.”

Pang Qian smiled, “Hmph! What is there between the two of us?”

Gu Mingxi also smiled. Pang Shuisheng walked over and told him a few words. Basically that he didn’t need to bother with his parents’ matters, that the adults would take care of it themselves.

Pang Shuisheng rubbed Gu Mingxi’s hair. He said, “Mingxi ah, just remember this one thing. If there are any problems with your parents, it’s not because of you. If they treat you unwell, you can just come here. I have an extra room here. We can clean it up, and you can stay there, no problem. I’ve always thought of you as my own son. A kid as good as you, there really aren’t many in this world. Look at Qian Qian...”

Pang Qian cried out unhappily, “Dad!”

Gu Mingxi smiled comfortably. He said, “Uncle, I’m going now. Thank you. Bye.”

He walked out the door and down the stairs. Pang Qian stood in front of their house door and looked down the stairs. When he left the building, she ran over to the balcony, grabbed onto the railing, and looked down. She saw Gu Guoxiang take Gu Mingxi’s backpack from his shoulders and pull open the door for him. Gu Mingxi bent down and got inside.

After the car left the Golden Compound, Pang Qian finally asked her dad, who was smoking at the side, “Dad, are Uncle Gu and Auntie Li going to get



divorced?”

“I don’t know.” Pang Shuisheng shook her head.

Pang Qian asked, “If they get divorced, what will happen with Gu Mingxi?”

Pang Shuisheng heaved a sigh. “Yes... No matter what else, the one who’s done no wrong is Gu Mingxi.”

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# Chapter 42

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 42 A Proper Person

*Gu Mingxi, is there a girl that you like?*

---

In the last days of winter break, Pang Qian didn't see Gu Mingxi again. While their parents were both at work, she called him. Gu Mingxi told her that the night he returned home, Li Han had also returned from her parents' home. They'd already made up and gone to work. They would take Gu Guoxiang's car every day.

Pang Qian didn't dare to ask what his parents' final decision was, but Gu Mingxi just said it on his own.

"They made up. My dad promised that he wouldn't repeat his offense, and my mom forgave him."

He didn't explain any more, and only said those two things.

Pang Qian was already prejudiced towards Gu Guoxiang, so she didn't really believe his words. But hearing Gu Mingxi's even tone, she didn't speak any more about it.

After all, she always hoped that he could have a stable, harmonious, happy family life.

School started up again in the middle of February. Pang Qian happily rode her bike to school. Before she passed the school gates, she saw that particular figure in the line of people. She shouted across the way, "Gu Mingxi!"

Gu Mingxi turned back, and when he saw her, she smiled. Pang Qian rode up next to him and got off her bike. First, she looked at his shoes—closed shoes, and he was wearing socks. She was very happy. She looked around and then asked, "Hey, how did you end up coming from this way? Isn't the bus stop that way?"



She pointed in the other direction. The bus card hung from Gu Mingxi's neck. "I didn't transfer buses. I walked the last part of the way."

Pang Qian walked her bike as the two of them headed inside the school gates. "How long do you have to walk?"

"Half an hour. If you walk fast, 20 minutes might be enough."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, "Does the path pass by the machinery plant?"

"Yeah."

"It's really hectic there," Pang Qian said. "I think you should just take the bus for your safety."

The machinery plant area was like a small village. There were a lot of migrant workers there. The area wasn't very good. There were a lot of small factories and the place wasn't safe.

Gu Mingxi smiled. "I usually can't even squeeze into the second bus. Once, I even waited for three buses and still couldn't get on. The money in my pocket was even stolen, so I just walked."

"There are a lot of thieves there!" Pang Qian cried out. "You should still be careful of your safety. If someone could go to school with you, that would be good."

Just at that moment, someone ran up to pat Gu Mingxi on the back.

"Gu Mingxi!"

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi turned back and saw Jiang Zhiya. She smiled beautifully like a flower. Her long hair reached down to her bottom. She wore a pink jacket and bell-bottom jeans. There was some embroidery on the pants as well. From top to bottom, she wore new clothes.

"Happy new year," Jiang Zhiya greeted Gu Mingxi with a wave. With a slight complaining tone, she said, "Gu Mingxi, why are you so busy over the holidays? Always going to your relative's place... I tried to invite you out, but couldn't."

Pang Qian stuck out her lips and glanced at Gu Mingxi. He wasn't busy at all over New Year's. He stayed home by himself every day. What relatives did he



have to visit?

Gu Mingxi said, “I have a lot of relatives. And my house is far away, so going out isn’t that convenient.”

Jiang Zhiya said, “Then I could come pick you up. I still haven’t been over to your house!”

As they were walking and talking, Jiang Zhiya finally noticed Pang Qian. “Crab, are you going to park your bike inside the school building?”

Pang Qian stared blankly, and then realized that she was pushing her bike towards the school building, and they’d passed the bike racks already.

Gu Mingxi laughed, and then Pang Qian glared at him. She pushed the bike and turned around. After just two steps, she suddenly called out, “Gu Mingxi, wait for me. I’ll go up with you!”

Gu Mingxi nodded, “Okay.”

Jiang Zhiya muttered quietly, “Being deskmates for the whole day isn’t enough, she still needs to walk up the stairs together.”

Gu Mingxi asked, “What did you say?”

She immediately smiled, “Oh, nothing.”

Gu Mingxi and Jiang Zhiya waited at the front of the school building for Gu Mingxi. The two of them chatted a bit. Jiang Zhiya asked Gu Mingxi, “Hey, is Crab really not your girlfriend?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head, “She’s not.”

“Then... Do you have a girlfriend?”

“No.” Gu Mingxi cut the topic off there by saying very properly, “I don’t think high school students should date. They should study.”

Jiang Zhiya stared at him, when small laughter sounded. Gu Mingxi turned around to see Xiao Yujing. She carried her backpack into the school building. Seeing Gu Mingxi looking at her with a red face, she said,

“ie,loveisabeautifulthing,whidictiithydy.” (The weird English dialogue is copied directly from the text.)



Her pronunciation was great. Her voice was also very crisp and appealing. Jiang Zhiya understood about half of what she said, Gu Mingxi understood it all. Just then, Pang Qian ran up to them with her backpack, her ponytail swinging behind her head. She cheerfully called out, “I’m here!”

Xiao Yujing looked at her, then gave Gu Mingxi a meaningful glance, before walking into the building with a smile.

Then Gu Mingxi’s face grew even more red.

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When they got to the classroom, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat down at their desks. Pang Qian asked him, “Jiang Zhiya invited you out over the break?”

Gu Mingxi nodded. “She said that we should walk around the temple fair. She even called two days in a row.”

“Why didn’t you go?”

Gu Mingxi gave her a strange look, “Why should I go?”

“Isn’t it boring to stay at home all day? If someone invites you out, you should go out a bit.” Pang Qian wrinkled her nose and laid on her desk, looking at him.”

Gu Mingxi was flipping through a book with his foot. He was wearing his open-toed socks. Taking advantage of when Pang Qian wasn’t watching, he started to pull his socks off. But he’d only rolled the edge down a bit when Pang Qian grabbed onto his ankle.

“You can’t take them off.” She glared at him. “You just got better. Do you want to go back for the IV drip?!”

Gu Mingxi looked at her and then gave in. “Okay. Let go, I won’t take them off.”=

Pang Qian loosened her grip, then said, “If someone invites you out, but you don’t think it’ll be very convenient, you can always call me to go along.”

Gu Mingxi’s feet were both rummaging in his backpack. His head was down. “Do you dislike Jiang Zhiya?”

“Why would I dislike her,” Pang Qian said awkwardly. “I’m just not very close with her.”



Gu Mingxi smiled, “You were even resenting her the other day, for having long hair.”

“I-I...” Pang Qian quibbled. “My dad said that girls with long hair have less experience (and knowledge). Haven’t you heard that before? Jiang Zhiya’s hair nearly reaches her legs when it’s down. How can she even wash her hair.”

Gu Mingxi just smiled.

Pang Qian sat still for awhile, then poked Gu Mingxi’s leg with her pen. “Hey, Gu Mingxi, do you like girls with long hair or short hair?”

“...” He didn’t answer.

“I’m asking you a question!”

“Long hair.” He turned to look at her, his gaze gentle.

Pang Qian’s eyes brightened with a gossip’s glow as she asked quietly, “Then... Gu Mingxi, is there a girl that you like?”

This time, Gu Mingxi blinked twice and nodded. Very clearly, he said, “Yes.”

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# Chapter 43

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 43 Incident on the Road

*What about you, is there a boy who you like?*

---

He said, “Yes.”

Pang Qian’s eyes widened. She hadn’t expected Gu Mingxi to answer that way. When they were at school, she was always with him, but she’d never seen any signs that he was interested in a girl. Pang Qian asked, “Who?”

Gu Mingxi looked at her, then suddenly countered, “What about you, is there a boy who you like?”

“You tell first!”

“First answer my question.”

Pang Qian became bashful. Looking at the students in front of them, she made sure that no one was paying any attention to them. Then she quietly responded to Gu Mingxi, “There’s a boy that I really like.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her, then asked automatically, “Who?”

“You tell me who you like first.”

“When you tell me, I’ll tell you.”

“Don’t lie. Actually you probably already know...” Pang Qian whispered into Gu Mingxi’s ear, “Xie Yi.”

Xie Yi?

Oh, Xie Yi.

Gu Mingxi’s eyes dropped, staring intensely at his legs on top of his desk.

He picked up a pen with his toes, his mind completely blank.



Xie Yi, so it was Xie Yi.

Pang Qian told him a secret from her heart, so she was very embarrassed. She pleaded to Gu Mingxi, “You can’t tell anyone. I’m only telling you.”

Gu Mingxi bit his lip, remaining silent.

Pang Qian wouldn’t let go so easily. She tugged on his sleeve. “You still haven’t told me who you like.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t know where to find someone to “let himself like.” He opened his mouth and finally said, “It’s... A girl from my drawing class. You don’t know her.”

“Ah?” Pang Qian was very suspicious. “How come I’ve never heard you mention her?”

His tone was very stiff. “You don’t know her, why would I talk to you about her?”

“What school does she study at? What’s her name? Is she pretty?” Pang Qian rested her chin in her hands and looked at him with great interest. “Does she know that you like her? Have you confessed to her yet?”

“She...” Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then turned to look at Pang Qian. Slowly, he said, “She’s not that tall, about your height. She’s pretty cute and her expressions are very lively. When she smiles, she looks especially pretty. She doesn’t know that I like her. I don’t plan on confessing, because she likes someone else.”

“Ah...” Pang Qian thought it was a great pity. She tried to comfort him, “Gu Mingxi, it’s okay. Look at me. Xie Yi doesn’t know that I like him either, and I don’t plan on confessing. We’re in the same boat.”

Then she started laughing foolishly.

Pang Qian truly believed Gu Mingxi’s words, because he’d never lied to her before. So when he said that he liked a girl in his drawing class, Pang Qian was convinced.

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She knew that there were several girls in their class that were interested in



him. Because Pang Qian was Gu Mingxi's deskmate and good friend, they would try to chat with her, and then happen to ask about Gu Mingxi. Whether or not he had a girlfriend, what his interests were, what he usually did over the weekends, *etc.*

Li Xiaoyan told Pang Qian, "Gu Mingxi's really handsome. Although he doesn't talk a lot, and he needs to use his feet to do things, I just think he's really handsome. There's just this other worldly quality about him."

Pang Qian asked, "What do you mean by other worldly?"

"Other worldly, like... Very refined and not ordinary. Aiya, you don't even understand this. To put it another way, he's just like a celestial being." Li Xiaoyan looked very shy.

Other worldly...celestial?

Several scenes popped into Pang Qian's mind: Gu Mingxi falling off his bike and eating mud. Gu Mingxi slipping on ice. Gu Mingxi swaying back and forth, as he lifted his right leg to do something. Gu Mingxi wolfing down his food when he was really hungry. Gu Mingxi stuttering after being shocked by that "inconceivable" movie. Gu Mingxi's distorted features as he was holding in his pee. And that scene buried deep in her memory, Gu Mingxi's red face as he was urinating...

Ah... That wasn't other wordly (*chu chen*), it was a theatrical performance (*chu xi*).

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi grew up together. It was nearly 16 years now that they'd never been apart. Even if they weren't neighbors anymore, when they got to school, they were still very close deskmates. They'd seen a lot of each others' lives. She was even witness to Gu Mingxi's accident and amputation.

In Pang Qian's eyes, Gu Mingxi's gender was already a bit blurred. She had several good female friends in Wang Tingting during primary school, Sun Mingfang in junior high, and now Zheng Qiaoqiao. They got along pretty well, and they would chat together as girls did. But Pang Qian always felt that the person she shared her secrets with the most was actually Gu Mingxi.

Pang Qian could bad talk some other girl to Gu Mingxi, and she was never



worried that he would repeat her words. She could also rant about which teacher's clothes were too ugly, and she was sure that he wouldn't tattle on her. Whenever her period came and she felt uncomfortable, she would openly let Gu Mingxi know and tell him not to provoke her. Even when her parents were fighting at home, she could confide in him. When she was hurt or having a hard time, she could cry in front of him.

That was how much Pang Qian relied on Gu Mingxi, and how much she trusted in him. She admitted, hearing that Gu Mingxi had a girl that he liked gave Pang Qian a sour feeling. But knowing that the girl didn't go to First High, and at most, he'd see her once a week, she felt great joy.

And lastly, because Gu Mingxi said that the girl liked another boy, Pang Qian started to feel outraged for him.

Such an awesome Gu Mingxi! That who-who-whoever actually didn't like him! Seriously bad taste!

In any case, Pang Qian felt that Gu Mingxi was her best friend. He was extraordinarily important to her, but this didn't extend to boy-girl relations.

Pang Qian thought that Gu Mingxi must think just the same. He definitely wouldn't like her that way.

After school, Pang Qian had to go to the gym for ping pong practice. Gu Mingxi and her parted, one of them walking to the bus stop.

He waited several minutes before a bus came. After seeing that both the front and back doors were squished full of people, he decided not to get on.

After waiting awhile longer, a bus still didn't come, so Gu Mingxi decided to do as he'd done on his way to school. He walked half an hour to take the bus that would take him home.

On the way, he passed by the machinery factory again. He was in a bad mood, his head lowered as he walked slowly, kicking at the pebbles on the road. He was completely unaware that behind him, there were two people following him.

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When he walked to a quiet area, the two guys caught up to him, blocking him off on either side. One of them with a buzz cut said, "Kid, you must've gotten a



bit of pocket money over the New Year's. Give your bro a bit to buy some cigarettes."

Gu Mingxi stood still and looked up at them. He wanted to walk around them, but was stopped by the one with blond hair. "Kid, hand your money over, and we won't cause you any trouble."

Gu Mingxi said, "The money's in my left pant pocket. Take it yourself."

Buzz-cut and Blondie had already noticed that Gu Mingxi didn't have any arms. That's why, despite him being tall, they weren't afraid of him. Buzz-cut dug into Gu Mingxi's pocket. He was very cooperative, but he only had 20 dollars in his pocket. Buzz-cut wasn't happy. "Student, you're covered in name brands, but this is all the money you have?"

Gu Mingxi said evenly, "That's really all I have."

Buzz-cut already grabbed his backpack. "Let me take a look and see what's in your bag. Kid, lying isn't a good thing. Don't blame me. Like I said, if there's no money, I'll let you go right away. But if I find even a dime, well then..."

His bag was tossed onto the ground. Without a word, Gu Mingxi turned and ran.

Buzz-cut didn't know what to think, so he just immediately chased after him. There were a lot of bikes and motorbikes near the factory area, and the roads were very narrow. Gu Mingxi's path got blocked by a motorbike, and Buzz-cut caught up to and grabbed onto him.

Gu Mingxi looked at him, "You can have all the money in the bag. Just let me go."

His gaze was magnanimous, without a trace of fear. There was only a kind of hidden contempt and anger. Buzz-cut stared back, then hit on the the head. Then he kicked his legs heavily.

"What? You trying to brush me off?" He grabbed onto Gu Mingxi's collar and pulled him into a nearby alley, despite Gu Mingxi's struggles. "Students nowadays sure are getting more outrageous."

Gu Mingxi cried out, "You can have all my money, it's in the bag! Just take it



yourselves and let me go!”

With a sneer, he pushed Gu Mingxi to the ground. While he was trying to get up, Buzz-cut kicked him in the stomach.

Blondie caught up with them, carrying Gu Mingxi’s bag. When he saw the scene in front of him, he was a bit worried. “Why did you beat him? We’re just getting some pocket money. He’s just a kid.”

Buzz-cut spoke ferociously, “I just didn’t like the way he was looking at me. The fucker’s disabled, but he was looking at me like I was garbage.”

When he finished talking, he kicked Gu Mingxi again. Gu Mingxi curled up, trying to protect himself. He clenched his teeth, refusing to cry out in pain.

Buzz-cut stopped and started going through Gu Mingxi’s bag. He pulled out 300 dollars and realized that the rest was just school books. He wasn’t very interested so he poured it all out and stomped on them to vent out his anger.

When he and Blondie were passing by Gu Mingxi’s body, he suddenly realized that there was a yellow chain on his ankle.

Gu Mingxi’s shoes had already been lost, and his pants had been pulled up because of the scuffle. That yellow chain immediately caught Buzz-cut’s attention. “What’s this. A gold pendant hidden on the foot. How smart.”

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# Chapter 44

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 44 Chance Meeting

*I just thought of my friend. A lot of people call her Crab, and she's a girl.*

---

Gu Mingxi recalled a time when he was younger, about 7 or 8 years old. The kids at the compound were all a bit naughty and mischievous, and they didn't really understand things. Some of them would be mean to him, like Zhang Jiaqi and Fu Liang, who never played frisbee with him.

At the time, Pang Qian was also still small. She followed Gu Mingxi everywhere. When Zhang Jiaqi brought kids over to bully him, Pang Qian would help him fight them off.

Pang Qian had always been very fierce. She really lived up to her "Crab" nickname. She was very good at fighting back, but still, she couldn't fight against a boy several years older than herself. In the end, she and Gu Mingxi would always walk home all dirtied and dinged up.

They agreed not to tell their parents what happened. In the end, it was Old Zeng who told Gu Guoxiang what happened when he saw him.

A lot of the parents of the kids who lived in the compound worked for the metals company, and their positions would be lower than Gu Guoxiang's. Zhang Jiaqi's dad ended up being sent on a business trip to Lanzhou, Gansu Province for half a year. From then on, Zhang Jiaqi didn't dare to bully Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian again.

A lot of time had already passed since then. From third grade onward, no one really bullied Gu Mingxi again. They all remembered the words of their parents and teachers. Gu Mingxi was a disabled child, and they should leave him be.

Parents told their kids, "Don't play with him if you don't have to. If he ends up



falling down, you'll get blamed for it too. His dad is very powerful, so don't provoke him."

And so, in all of the Golden Compound, Gu Mingxi's only remaining friend was Pang Qian.

Gu Mingxi lied on the muddy ground, his clothes long ago stained with dirt. His body felt a faint pain. He saw Buzz-cut and Blondie walking off, so he clenched his teeth and started pulling himself up. Suddenly, Buzz-cut turned around and started heading back towards him.

The events that had just happened caught Buzz-cut by surprise, and Gu Mingxi's actions were contrary to his previous attitude. He was only going to pull the chain from his ankle, but the youth acted as if he'd gone crazy. Not only didn't he let the guy take away the chain, he even kicked him several times.

He was still lying on the ground, unable to stand up. He called out, "I already gave you the money! Don't take the chain! It's not worth money!"

Buzz-cut's anger rose up from inside, and he kicked viciously at Gu Mingxi's legs. Gu Mingxi couldn't hide from it, his legs burning with pain now. Buzz-cut already saw that the chain on his ankle wasn't gold, just some worthless beads, but his anger couldn't be contained. He just had to take that chain. He couldn't untie the knot, so he just tugged at it, but it still didn't come off. Then he pulled out a blade to just cut it off.

Gu Mingxi shouted out loudly, his body continually flailing, his legs struggling endlessly. Buzz-cut's hand slipped, and the chain wasn't cut. Rather, there was now a hole in Gu Mingxi's right leg.

Blood started flowing out, and Blondie got scared. He came over to pull Buzz-cut away, but he was unwilling to leave. Just then, a shout came from the exit of the alley, "What's going on?!"

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Blondie and Buzz-cut turned looked back, then started running. The person at the alley exit was about to chase after them, but seeing Gu Mingxi, he stopped in his tracks, a frown on his face.

He bent over to help Gu Mingxi up. Seeing the blood seeping out of his leg, he



immediately said, “Kid, can you walk? If you can walk, I’ll take you to the store and help you stop the bleeding.”

Gu Mingxi lifted his head. The person was about 27 or 28 years old. He wasn’t tall, but he was very sturdy looking. His face was also a very honest-looking face. His skin was dark, and hanging from his neck was a golden chain as thick as a child’s finger.

He already saw that Gu Mingxi didn’t have arms. He sighed, “This place just keeps getting worse. In the past, those scumbags only blackmailed the passing students. Now they’re even trying to take lives.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t want to return home in this state either. He didn’t want his mother to worry. Although this man didn’t look particularly friendly, he had saved his life. Gu Mingxi nodded, “I can walk. Thank you.”

The man helped him collect his backpack, stuffing the school books back inside. He carried it over his shoulder as he and Gu Mingxi walked out of the alley. He had a barbecue shop nearby. Their business was mostly at night, so they only opened when it was dusk out. There weren’t any customers inside, just two guys deftly preparing meat skewers.

Since the people working at the barbecue place often injured their hands from skewering food or grilling, the man had a first aid kit prepared to stop bleeding. He let Gu Mingxi sit down in a chair, and then he crouched down in front of him to help take care of the wound. The young boy felt very awkward. His clothes were extremely dirty, and some parts were even torn. The two empty sleeves hanging at his side caught the attention of the two kids working.

The man asked Gu Mingxi, “Kid, what’s your name?”

Gu Mingxi hesitated a moment and then said, “Gu Mingxi.”

“Xiao Gu.” The man helped bandage up his leg. He smiled as he said, “My last name is Sha. You can call me *Shayu* (Shark).” He pointed to the two kids in the back. “That’s Clam and Oyster.”

Gu Mingxi chortled. Shark gave him a strange look. “What are you laughing at? Are our names very funny?”

“No,” Gu Mingxi said. “I just thought of my friend. A lot of people call her Crab,



and she's a girl."

Shark laughed out loud, "Kid's got a big heart. He can even laugh at a time like this. I like that."

He sent Gu Mingxi to the bus stop on his bike. He waited with him, and then asked Gu Mingxi how he lost his arms. Finally, Shark said, "Kid, in the future when you take the bus to school, and you have to cross through the factory area, you just let anyone who's looking for trouble know that you're Shark's Barbecue's boss' Shark's brother. I don't know about elsewhere, but at least in the factory area here, no one will dare touch you."

Gu Mingxi got onto the bus to go home. When he got home, Li Han was making dinner in the kitchen. Gu Mingxi went into his room to change his clothes. He made sure to hide away his bloodied clothing, planning to throw it out the next day.

When he took off his pants, he realized that his leg was bruised, and the bruise was pretty big. He bent over and touched the wound with his toe, then felt a biting pain.

Gu Mingxi sat on his bed, in a bit of a daze. He looked down at his right ankle again. Shark helped him disinfect and bandage the cut. He said the wound wasn't very deep, so it shouldn't be a big problem.

Gu Mingxi's sight caught onto the chain around his ankle. From the moment that Pang Qian helped him tie it on, he'd never taken it off. Fortunately, it wasn't cut off. That's what Gu Mingxi thought.

That evening, Gu Mingxi sat at his desk, organizing his school books. They were new books, but they were already covered in dirt and torn now. Gu Mingxi thought for a bit, then decided to buy a few book covers over the weekend.

While he was tidying up his things, he realized that he hadn't touched the math practice book that he brought over to Pang Qian's house since he'd come back home.

Gu Mingxi remembered that he still had half a practice test to finish. He opened the book, and as he was flipping through the pages, he stopped. He saw Pang Qian's handwriting.



She'd actually finished an entire set of problems, though he wasn't sure when. Gu Mingxi thought it was pretty funny. In the multiple choice section, many of her answers were incorrect. And for the free response question, she'd done about half the work, before drawing a crying face on the page. She wrote, "Gu Mingxi, it's so hard! I can't do it!"

Gu Mingxi unknowingly drew into a smile. He did the problem set over, then went over to his bed and comfortably fell asleep.

That night, Li Han and Gu Guoxiang didn't suspect a thing. The next morning, Gu Mingxi left the house early. He tossed out his bloodied pants and got onto the first bus to get to school. When he got off the bus, he unsurprisingly was unable to get onto the second bus. He thought it over, but still decided to just walk the remainder of the way to school.

As he walked through the machine factory area, he couldn't help but take a look down the alley where he'd been extorted before. Then he walked past it in big strides. When he passed Shark's barbecue place, he saw that the doors were closed, and there was garbage piled up after a night's work.

He didn't stop, just walking past, minding his own business. Yesterday's events were like a dream. If not for the bruises all over his body, he would suspect that none of it had happened.

But he didn't have any plans on being friendly with Shark and these people. He was still a student. He was from a good family, he was taught well, and he was a good student. He and Shark were just strangers who met by chance. Their lives would never intersect with each other.

He didn't tell any of this to Pang Qian, because he didn't want her to worry. This was just a one time thing, a misfortune. Gu Mingxi told himself that he had to be more careful in the future, to be more low key.

In this world, there were too many unbelievable, unexpected occurrences and people. If you meet these things, you can only consider yourself unlucky. His luck wouldn't always be bad though. Look, just a day ago, didn't Shark come to save him?

At that time, how could he have known what was to happen two months later, something that brought him back into contact with Shark.



It was the week of midterms for the second semester. The year's top 3 remained unchanged. It was still Xiao Yujing, Wu Min, and Gu Mingxi. Pang Qian ranked 7th from the bottom of her class. She was pretty happy about it, since it was progress after all.

It was mid April. Because Youth Day (May 4th) was soon approaching, E City's Board of Education organized an event and selected various outstanding students from various areas of the city. Over the two weeks before Youth Day, the education channel in E City would be showing a series that introduced these outstanding students for 20 minutes at a time.

Compared to the well-performing but simple students like Xiao Yujing and Wu Min, the school obviously wanted to recommend Gu Mingxi.

"Broken in body, but firm in spirit." This type of story was most likely to be selected. There was always an outstanding, but disabled student who won awards. Of course, before making their recommendation, Teacher Dai asked Gu Mingxi his opinions on it.

Actually, convincing Gu Mingxi was very simple. Teacher Dai said, "Gu Mingxi, if you can get an award this time, it will be very helpful when you're applying to college. Because of the society's assurance in your abilities, if a college were ever to reject you based only on the fact that you're disabled, then you can present this award from the Department of Education. You can even go to the media for help. Of course, that's the worst situation. But right now, what we want to do is make you a role model for students in the district, in the city. This can only benefit you."

Gu Mingxi went home and asked Li Han about it. Li Han thought about it, then gave Teacher Dai a call to agree on this matter.

So, on an April morning, as Pang Qian carried her backpack to school, she came across a strange scene. There were a lot of people outside the classroom. Some had cameras, some had reflectors. There was also a pretty lady carrying a microphone, who was fixing her makeup. Pang Qian looked around curiously, and was about to enter the classroom, when Teacher Dai pulled her back.

"Pang Qian, I'm going to apologize to you first." She pointed to a front row in



the classroom. “Today, we moved yours and Gu Mingxi’s desk up front. You’ll still sit in your regular seat in the back. Today, the TV station is coming to record Gu Mingxi’s daily activities. I arranged for Xiao Yujing to sit next to him today. Don’t think too much about it. I only want to show off Gu Mingxi’s excellence to a greater extent. If he can win an award, it will be very helpful to his future.”

Pang Qian didn’t really understand. Showing off Gu Mingxi’s excellence was one thing, but why did they have to change seats, and even deskmates? What did this mean? Xiao Yujing was ranked 1st in the year. Pang Qian was the bottom of their class. If Gu Mingxi and Xiao Yujing sat together, that would be more outstanding? Is that what it meant?

But facing her favorite teacher, Pang Qian didn’t dare say any more. She nodded and carried her bag into the room.

She entered from the back door, then looked up front at Gu Mingxi sitting in the first row. His feet were up on his desk, organizing his things. He wore a white shirt, and foolishly(?) had a badge on his left chest.

Xiao Yujing sat next to him. That was Pang Qian’s desk, because she’d never changed desks. Pang Qian liked to draw on her desk. Before their English diction practice, she would write down the words that she couldn’t memorize. Before chemistry exams, she would scribble down formulas she didn’t know. Pang Qian’s forehead was covered in sweat. She’d even written Xie Yi’s name on her desk before. She wasn’t sure if she’d ever erased it.

Xiao Yujing lifted her head and looked at Pang Qian, shooting her a smile. Her hair was short, and she wore a white shirt. Her clothes made her look very pure and delicate. Pang Qian’s heart felt like it was stuffed up with a big rock. Even her pace started to slow.

She, more than anyone else, wanted Gu Mingxi to be recognized as an outstanding student. But she was Gu Mingxi’s deskmate!

From the day they started school. Ten years! She was his only deskmate!

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 45

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 45 Making a Fool of Yourself

*I've always thought that his achievements and him having no arms are completely unrelated.*

---

Pang Qian sat at the back of the classroom. Beside her was Xiao Yujing's deskmate, Xiao Chen. The two of them weren't close. They exchanged awkward glances, but didn't have anything to say to each other.

Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi, who was sitting right in front of the teacher's lectern. In order for him to sit comfortably, the entire second row of desks had been shifted back slightly. Pang Qian rested her chin on her crossed arms, staring at the back of Gu Mingxi's head. She suddenly recalled that period in junior high, when the two of them sat at opposite corners. Gu Mingxi probably looked at her like this.

Because the program was conducting interviews, their classes had been adjusted, so the first class was English. The entire rest of the class had become a supporting cast, to show off the excellence and perfection of the male lead. Pang Qian finally understood Teacher Dai's intentions. The camera was set up in front of Gu Mingxi and Xiao Yujing. The two of them stood, practicing their English loudly and fluently.

The next class was Chinese. The teacher asked a question and had Gu Mingxi stand up to answer it. Pang Qian saw the camera quickly follow his face, but Gu Mingxi continued on as if nothing had happened. He stood still and spoke.

The third class was chemistry. Everyone went over to the lab room. Gu Mingxi conducted the experiment with his feet, along with Xiao Yujing's help. The whole process was recorded by the camera.



The only thing was that Xiao Yujing lit and extinguished the alcohol lamp. Pang Qian wondered why they didn't let Gu Mingxi do that part. He was obviously very practiced with it.

When Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were together, Gu Mingxi never let her touch the fire.

The fourth class was physical education. The TV station said they wanted to film Gu Mingxi's activities outdoors. After all, an excellent student couldn't only be good at studying. He should be able to strike a balance between work and fun.

Usually, Gu Mingxi would also participate in physical education. He would run and do the long jump. When the other boys played ball or pull-ups or throwing(?), Gu Mingxi sat at the side quietly watching.

This time, the teacher had all the boys line up and run. Gu Mingxi was at the end of the line. The cameraman stood off the field, his camera following Gu Mingxi the whole way. At the same time, Pang Qian's gaze also followed him.

When Gu Mingxi ran, it looked rather strange. Because he had no arms, his white shirt sleeves continually danced in the wind. His hair stuck up against his forehead, but his face looked extremely calm.

Pang Qian stared awhile, then finally pulled her eyes away. At this time, Xiao Yujing walked up to her and said quietly, "Crab, after school, you should spend some time with Gu Mingxi. His mood doesn't seem to be very good today."

Pang Qian was silent a moment, then asked, "Why is he in a bad mood?"

Xiao Yujing lowered her voice even more. "Teacher Dai said that the TV station had to film him eating with his feet. They had to film some aspects of his personal life after all. He was pretty unhappy about it, but there was nothing else to be done."

Pang Qian, "..."

At lunch, the cameraman really followed Gu Mingxi to the cafeteria. This time, Zhou Nanzhong helped him get his food. Four boys sat around the table. Gu Mingxi lifted his foot up and lowered his head, eating silently.



The cameraman said, "Student Gu, chat a bit with your classmates while you're eating. Look a bit happier."

Gu Mingxi was speechless, but he could only pull his lips up into a smile. To Wang Song, he said, "Is your pork chop...good?"

Wang Song answered after a moment, "I-it's good. Do you want some? I can get some for you."

Gu Mingxi shook his head, still smiling. "No, thanks. I don't like pork."

Wang Song, "..."

Before the afternoon classes, the filming was pretty much done. The female reporter interviewed Gu Mingxi briefly. She asked about his dreams.

Gu Mingxi stood up straight, facing the camera. He spoke into the microphone, "I want to study well, get into a good college, study something that I'll be able to do with my body, and find a job after I graduated. I want to, with my own abilities, become a useful person to society."

The female reporter asked, "After you became disabled, did you ever feel despair, like giving up?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head, "No."

"Never, not even once?"

"Never."

The female reporter was caught off guard. She turned to the cameraman and said, "Wait, let's do this part again."

She said to Gu Mingxi, "Student Gu, think about this response. After you lost your arms, you lost your confidence in life, you were on the brink of collapse. But because of your mother's care, your teachers' encouragement, your classmates' help, you gradually learned to use your feet to do things. Slowly, you built up your confidence."

Gu Mingxi frowned, "Why do I have to respond like that?"

"Because..." The reporter thought a bit. "This way, your story has ups and downs. I'm sure that when you first lost your arms, you despaired a lot, right?"



This was his life. But in someone else's eyes, it was just a story.

Gu Mingxi didn't respond. He didn't intend to explain himself to this stranger. They were all putting on a performance after all. So he answered her question once more, his complexion remained the same, his heartbeat still stable. He even answered with very sincere eyes.

The female reporter was satisfied.

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Afterwards, the reporter had Teacher Dai arrange several students to be interviewed, to ask about their impressions of Gu Mingxi. Teacher Dai quickly found four people.

Xiao Yujing smiled to the camera. "I'm Gu Mingxi's deskmate, and I've known him for nearly a year. I really admire him. He's very studious, never late, and he even draws really well. Whatever we can do with our hands, he can also do with his feet. I hope that he can get into the college he wants. And I'm sure that he will find success."

Zhou Nanzhong, "Gu Mingxi's writing with his feet looks better than my writing with my hands. Even when it's cold in the winter, he bares his feet to do things. It really makes you admire him."

Wang Song, "Aside from being a good student, he has a lot of interests. We often play soccer/football together. He's not at all introverted, and he's really easy to get along with."

Pang Qian blinked, "..."

The reporter said, "Student, say something!"

Pang Qian spoke into the microphone, "Say what?"

"Tell us your impression of Gu Mingxi."

Pang Qian thought for a long time, then said, "Gu Mingxi is... He's... He... He's a good person. He gets good grades. My grades aren't good, but he always helps explain things to me. He's a bit... He likes to lecture people? Whenever he performs well, he never says it, but I know that he's really satisfied inside. He has a good temper, but he sort of likes to decide and do things on his own..."



“...” The reporter cut her off. She asked, “Gu Mingxi doesn’t have arms. What difficulties do you think he’s had to overcome to reach his achievements today?”

Pang Qian was silent, then finally said, “I’ve always thought that his achievements and him having no arms are completely unrelated.”

“Alright, Student, we’re done recording.” The beautiful reporter was about to take back the microphone, “Let’s wrap it up.”

Pang Qian grabbed the microphone back and said, “Can I say one last thing?”  
“?”

Pang Qian held onto the microphone and spoke towards the camera, “In my eyes, Gu Mingxi isn’t special at all. He’s just like me, just like all of us. If he’s able to join the Group of Outstanding Students, it’s because he was originally outstanding, not because... Not because his body...”

The female reporter pulled the microphone back, and looked strangely at Pang Qian. “Student, we’re really done recording.”

Pang Qian quietly loosened her grip.

After the people from the TV station left, Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song helped Gu Mingxi move his desk back to the corner by the window.

Gu Mingxi was deskmates with Pang Qian again. The two of them looked at each other. They stared and stared, and then smiled. Gu Mingxi said, “Today was really exhausting.”

Pang Qian asked, “Do you think you’ll get the award?”

“I don’t know.”

“I just told the reporter about you (lit. I spoke up for you / I helped you speak),” Pang Qian said shyly. “I don’t know if they’ll air it.”

Gu Mingxi asked her curiously, “What did you say?”

“Not telling you.” Pang Qian smiled. “If it airs, you’ll know.”

Gu Mingxi’s lips curved into a smile. Pang Qian thought of Xiao Yujing’s words and said, “Hey, Gu Mingxi, after school, let’s go walk around the little marketplace. Then we’ll go home, okay?”



The so-called marketplace was just a collective group of street vendors next to the park. The park was free to enter, and there were some street vendors who were afraid of being caught (by the police), so they'd slip into the park. As time passed, some twenty something vendors gathered together in the park. Pang Qian called this the little marketplace.

Next to the park was a primary school. When school was over, the kids loved to flock to the food stalls. Although Pang Qian was already in high school, she was still a glutton. Before Gu Mingxi moved, she often dragged him here to buy snacks. After Gu Mingxi moved, they'd never been back.

Pang Qian parked her bike at the park gate, and then walked inside with Gu Mingxi. Before they saw the food stalls, they could smell the aroma floating in the air.

Pang Qian pulled 10 dollars out of her pocket and said happily, "My treat today. I haven't had fried tofu in ages."

She bought two sticks of fried tofu, and she and Gu Mingxi sat down on a bench inside the park. She ate a bite, then fed Gu Mingxi a bit. Gu Mingxi was silent the whole time. After Pang Qian watched him for awhile, she said, "Forget about it. The filming's already over. It would be different if you hadn't agreed with Teacher Dai to film it, but since you agreed to it, what's there to think about?"

Gu Mingxi said unconvincingly, "Who said I was thinking about that?"

"What else then? Are you thinking about the girl you like?"

During the past two months, she could occasionally bring up this unknown girl. With a headache, Gu Mingxi said, "Can you stop talking about her?"

"I told you to invite her out together one day, but you didn't want to." Pang Qian curled her lips, "You won't even tell me her name. You're so petty."

Gu Mingxi endured it.

After awhile, he said, "Pang Pang, does E City's education channel broadcast across the whole city?"



“Yeah, it’s on channel 5.”

“I don’t know what it’ll be like after it airs.” Gu Mingxi let out a sigh. “I thought they were just going to film a class. I didn’t know that they were going to film me eating, washing my face, putting on my shoes, writing... Tell me, what’s so interesting about that stuff? It’s like other people don’t eat or wash their face.”

Pang Qian poked his shoulder. “Gu Mingxi, are you worried about something?”

“...” Gu Mingxi turned to look at her. He shook his head, “It’s nothing”

When it was time for E City’s extraordinary youth program to air with Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian and her parents had already settled in front of their TV set. The host first introduced the main character of the week. A close up of a pair of legs appeared on the screen. The left foot was sitting on top of a desk, and the right was holding a pen, writing down his name.

The lens was pushed up very close. Pang Qian could see the short, clean toes, the leg that projected out, and the green veins on the back of his foot. Beautiful letters appeared on the book he wrote on. She could even see the chain on Gu Mingxi’s ankle. She cried out excitedly to Pang Shuisheng, “Dad! I gave Gu Mingxi that chain!”

The camera pulled back, and finally the rest of his body could be seen. Gu Mingxi’s whole person appeared on the screen. His head was bowed as he sat in front of the custom-made desk, his feet resting on the top of it as he wrote. His white shirt sleeves hung gently at his sides. Looking at it from the TV screen, Gu Mingxi’s face felt a bit unfamiliar, but he looked more handsome than in real life.

Jin Ai’hua was removing the shell of melon seeds. She said, “I haven’t seen Gu Mingxi in a few months, and he seems to have grown a bit more. He really is looking more and more handsome.”

Pang Shuisheng was very in something. “Pang Pang, aren’t you Gu Mingxi’s deskmate?”

“Of course!” Pang Qian pointed at Xiao Yujing on the screen, and explained loudly, “They’re just acting!”

Pang Shuisheng’s eyes widened. “Why? Because you’re not as pretty as that girl? I don’t see it.”



Pang Qian, “...”

The entire program was about introducing Gu Mingxi and his daily activities. Using his feet to put his things away in his backpack, using his feet to write, read, take exams. Using his feet to eat, eating as he laughed with his classmates. He could use his feet to work on a science experiment. He wasn't introverted. He participated in physical education class like everyone else. Under the blue sky, he ran quickly...

When the reporter was interviewing Teacher Dai, Pang Qian said, “The ending is definitely going to be our interviews, Dad! I was interviewed too!”

She was correct. Right after, there was Xiao Yujing's interview. And then Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song, and Gu Mingxi himself.

They cut out Pang Qian's interview. She was really disappointed. She stared Gu Mingxi on the screen, who was speaking into the microphone, his face very calm. “When my arms were just amputated, I couldn't accept the truth that I no longer had arms. I was filled with despair and on the verge of giving up. At the time, I felt like a useless person, unable to do anything. I lost all hope. Later on, because my mother...”

Pang Qian turned to look at Pang Shuisheng. “Dad, when Gu Mingxi first lost his arms, was he really filled with despair?”

“Was he?” Pang Shuisheng looked back into his memories, but he couldn't quite recall it. He asked Pang Qian, “Didn't you play with him often then? Did you ever get that impression?”

“No.” Pang Qian curled her lips. “I even think I remember him comforting me, telling me not to be afraid.”

On the other side of the city, Gu Mingxi and his parents were also watching the program. Halfway through, Gu Guoxiang silently stood up. He walked to the balcony with a cigarette in hand.

After he finished his smoke, he came back inside. Gu Mingxi was currently discussing with Li Han whether or not this program would be helpful to him getting into college. They were still thinking about it when Gu Guoxiang strode in and turned off the TV. He turned back and glared sternly at Gu Mingxi. “Who



told you to film this? Who?! Who allowed you to film this?! Do you still consider me as your father? Ah? Who was it that agreed to let you film this kind of disgraceful thing?!”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 46

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 46 Losing Your Wits

*Are you okay today? You seem a bit strange.*

---

Gu Mingxi was still.

Li Han stood up and raised her chin to Gu Guoxiang. “It was me. What about it? I agreed to it.”

“Are you crazy?!” Gu Guoxiang was unable to contain his anger. “Why would you agree to let him film this kind of thing?! Is it an honor? Does this look good? Going on TV to let the whole city see this?! What exactly were you thinking?!”

“Have you forgotten when Gu Mingxi graduated from primary school and junior high?!” Li Han shouted out loudly, her eyes welling with tears. “He obviously scored more than the requirement, but they didn’t let him have an interview! We even went to Vast Voyage and Ninth High! Both schools rejected him just because he didn’t have arms! And that was just high school! When he goes to college in the future, he’ll have to live in the dorms too! It will be even more troublesome to admit Mingxi then! Can you guarantee that the school he wants to go to won’t reject him because he has no arms? Can you guarantee it 100 percent?!”

She pulled Gu Mingxi up and pushed him in front of Gu Guoxiang. “Look clearly, Gu Guoxiang! Gu Mingxi is our son! He’s 17 years old! Look at his eyes, his nose! Look at his height! He’s your son! Do you two look alike? I’ve never understood why you think he’s an embarrassment to you! Mingxi’s already doing very well! What more do you want from him?!”

Li Han rarely shouted like this at Gu Guoxiang. She exerted her strength and pushed Gu Mingxi to Gu Guoxiang. Gu Guoxiang took two steps back, and Gu



Mingxi pressed back against his mother's strength. The three of them slowly stopped.

Gu Guoxiang wiped his face with his hands. When he dropped his hands, his eyes were red. "I will think of something to help Mingxi get to college. Whether it's through connections (*guanxi*), whether we have to send gifts, I'll think of something! But how could you agree to this kind of thing without even talking to me about it?"

With a trembling hand, he pointed to the black screen of the TV. "My, Gu Guoxiang's, son was just shown to the entire city on TV! See how he lives his day! How fresh, using feet to eat! Isn't it pitiful? And laughable? Which way do you want people to think?! What do you want my friends, my clients, my subordinates to think?!"

"I didn't tell you because I knew that's what you would think," Li Han said coldly. "I don't think it's embarrassing or disgraceful at all. Gu Guoxiang, I've already seen through you. I don't expect anything anymore. I just want Gu Mingxi to get into a good college. I'm willing to do anything that will help him get there. Expect you to make connections? Hmph! I might as well have expectations of a dog!"

Hearing this, Gu Guoxiang raised his hand at Li Han. Gu Mingxi saw this unfolding and immediately used his body to push Li Han away. Gu Guoxiang's palm landed on his back with a pa!

"Mingxi!"

Li Han embraced him as she cried. Gu Mingxi clenched his teeth as he tried to reign in his staggered steps. His back was in great pain. He turned back to look at his dad and said in a low voice, "Dad, the program has already been broadcast. What's the point of saying all this now. And you've already hit [someone] and scolded [someone]. Stop blaming Mom. I was the one who insisted on going onto the program. It has nothing to do with Mom. I was worried about getting into college. I was wrong not to discuss it with you, and for that, I'm sorry."

The three of them were silent. After awhile, Gu Guoxiang picked up his keys from the tea table and said, "You've grown up and you have your own plans. It doesn't matter what your dad thinks about it, ah..."



He put on his coat and headed to the front door. Li Han cried out, “Gu Guoxiang, where are you going?”

“Do I need to report to you where I go?” His gaze was cold and could pierce into someone’s heart. “In your heart, I’m no better than a dog, right? Ah.”

With that, he opened the door and left.

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Li Han’s body swayed, and she sat down gently. These past few months, her relationship with Gu Guoxiang was like walking on a tightrope in mid-air. On the surface, they appeared calm and stable, but in reality, just a slight trace of wind would knock her down to hell.

Gu Mingxi crouched down next to Li Han. He called to her with concern, “Mom.”

Li Han sat still for a moment and then responded, “I’m fine. Don’t worry, Mingxi. I won’t leave you.”

During the winter break, she’d gone back to her parents’ home to distract herself a bit. When she came back and heard that Gu Mingxi hadn’t actually gone to his (paternal) grandparents’ house, but had instead gone to stay with Pang Qian, and even got sick from being out in the rain, she felt extremely guilty. She swore that from then on, no matter what happened, she wouldn’t leave her son on his own again.

That night, Gu Guoxiang didn’t return home. Gu Mingxi didn’t know where his dad would have gone. Li Han returned to her room pretty early, and she even locked her door. Gu Mingxi tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep all night.

His heart was filled with confusion as he thought back to when he saw himself on TV. It was the first time he watched himself moving through his day. So as he was using his feet to do things, that was what people saw. Was it really like his father said, pitiful and laughable?

When the sky outside his window started glowing white, Gu Mingxi decided to get out of bed. He stood looking out his window and saw a flock of birds fly past. His gaze fixed on those little things with wings, until they flew faraway and disappeared into the distance.



That day, when Gu Mingxi arrived at school, he could feel that the students and teachers were looking at him peculiarly. A lot of people had seen the TV program. Usually, a lot of people were very curious about Gu Mingxi's lifestyle, but since they weren't in his class, they couldn't understand it. This program was able to quench much of their curiosity, and when these people saw him in the flesh, they couldn't help their whispers.

First Year, Class 2's students were comparatively calm. They'd quickly forgotten about this matter, continuing on with their own studies.

The physics teacher handed out the unit test exam paper. When Gu Mingxi bent over to look at the sheet of questions, he realized that he was unable to settle down.

He picked up his pen with his foot, then stared blankly for awhile. Beside him, Pang Qian was working on the questions. She glanced over at Gu Mingxi's paper and saw that it was completely blank. Startled, she reached out her right hand to poke him. Gu Mingxi didn't react, which scared Pang Qian even more. No longer worried that the teacher might think she was cheating, she inched closer to him and gave him a pat. Quietly, she said, "Hey, hey, Gu Mingxi..."

Gu Mingxi suddenly turned to look at Pang Qian. The physics teacher at the front of the room shouted out a reprimand, scaring Pang Qian to lower her head. Gu Mingxi finally came back to his senses and randomly answered a few of the questions.

When school was over, Pang Qian was about to head to ping pong practice, but she was still worried about Gu Mingxi. She asked, "Are you okay today? You seem a bit strange."

"I'm fine." Gu Mingxi put away his things into his backpack. "I'm going first. Bye."

Pang Qian said, "Why don't I skip practice today and go for a walk with you?"

"No need." Gu Mingxi stood up, bent over, and hooked the right strap of his backpack on. He shrugged back, stretching his left shoulder into the strap. Once, twice, but he still didn't get it on.

Pang Qian stood in front of him, then helped him put his backpack on. She



even pulled out and tidied his shirt sleeves. Gu Mingxi lowered his head, “Thanks.”

“What’s the need to say thanks to me.” Pang Qian pouted, thinking that Gu Mingxi was acting very strangely today. She watched as he walked out of the classroom, wondering what he was thinking about.

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Gu Mingxi didn’t get on the bus. With his head bowed, he walked along the road. When he got to the area by the machinery plant, he saw Shark’s barbecue shop again. Unexpectedly, Shark was standing right in front, sweeping the floor.

He was the same as before, but with fewer clothes on now, he looked more strong and powerful. He was humming a song, with a cigarette sticking out from his mouth. He turned around and saw Gu Mingxi standing in front of him.

“Ey, kid!” Shark hadn’t seen Gu Mingxi in two months. He asked, “Is your leg better?”

“Yeah,” Gu Mingxi lifted his leg slightly. “There’s just a scar left.”

“Did you run into those hoodlums again?”

“No.”

“What’s wrong? In a bad mood? Did you just get off from school?” Shark looked at Gu Mingxi, then asked, “Should I send you to the bus stop?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. He lowered his eyes, and after a moment said, “Shark, can I sit in your shop for awhile? I don’t want to go home.”

“?” Shark was caught off guard. Then he immediately grabbed onto Gu Mingxi’s shoulders, “Of course, no problem. Eat and then go. My treat.”

He brought Gu Mingxi inside his shop. Clam and Oyster were, again, skewering meat. This pretty, armless boy had left a deep impression on them. When they saw him, they smiled. Gu Mingxi saw the two of them stringing the skewers together at a lightening pace, and was intrigued by it. He stood next to them, watching awhile. Shark asked, “Kid, what do you like to eat? Tonight, I’ll personally cook for you.”

Clam had a baby face and only looked to be slightly older than Gu Mingxi. With



a smile, he said, “Shark hasn’t grilled anything in a long time. Kid, what an honor it is for you.”

Shark gave Clam a smack on the head. “Who are you to call him ‘kid’? You’re hardly any older!”

He turned with cigarette in mouth and asked Gu Mingxi, “Kid, how old are you?”

“I’ll be 17 in August.”

“Oh, only a year younger than me.” Clam was very happy, “I just turned 18.”

Oyster called out from the side, “I’m 19!”

“He’s still a student. Move aside, the two of you.” Shark squinted and reprimanded them. “Listen up. Don’t give him an cigarettes to smoke. Don’t give him any alcohol to drink. If he wants to eat some meat, give him as much as he wants!”

Gu Mingxi watched their clamoring from the side. Shark never spared these two guys when he was scolding them, but the young Clam and Oyster both seemed to take it well. Gu Mingxi found a chair and sat down. Staying in this unfamiliar barbecue shop, he suddenly felt at ease.

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# Chapter 47

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 47 Ridiculous

*I want to eat stir-fried noodles. Will you go out to eat with me?*

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Pang Qian was very absent-minded at practice again. After a few rounds with Zheng Qiaoqiao, Xie Yi who was watching from the side said, “Crab, stop playing. If you have something you need to do, stop wasting your time here.”

Pang Qian stopped for a moment, then said, “I’m fine.”

“You’re fine but you’re playing like this?” Xie Yi furrowed his brows. “Take a break then. I’ll practice with Zheng Qiaoqiao.”

Pang Qian walked off to the side of the court with her head lowered, feeling not at all well. She put down her paddle and started running laps.

She ran along the outer lane of the gymnasium, running until she was covered with sweat and her face was flushed bright red. After several laps, she turned and walked over to the ping pong table. She picked up her water bottle and gulped down some water. Xie Yi suddenly snatched her bottle and said seriously, “After strenuous exercise, don’t drink the water so quickly. Take it slowly.”

Pang Qian was panting as she turned to him.

Zheng Qiaoqiao walked over to Pang Qian and asked with concern, “Little Crab, what’s the matter with you today?”

Pang Qian didn’t answer, so Xie Yi asked, “Did you have a fight with Gu Mingxi?”

“No!” Pang Qian said quietly, “Just... Today, Gu Mingxi’s acting a bit strangely. He was zoning out all day. During our test, he didn’t even finish. I’m really worried about him.”



Xie Yi asked, “Is it because of the TV program yesterday?”

Pang Qian blinked at him. “You saw it too?”

“Yeah. All the teachers notified their classes about it. The whole school probably saw it.” Xie Yi shrugged his shoulders. “To be honest, I can’t really say that ‘it’s not a big deal’ or something like that. Kind of like you don’t understand until you put yourself in someone else’s shoes. I suspect that Gu Mingxi would feel a bit unhappy. Crab, you should go be with him.”

Pang Qian responded anxiously, “I know. But right now, we live in different places. I can’t go home with him.”

“It’s fine, don’t worry too much. I’m sure that Gu Mingxi will be okay soon,” Xie Yi said, with a brilliant smile. He picked up Pang Qian’s paddle from the table and handed it to her. “Practice a little more. It’s almost time to go home.”

Pang Qian finished practice, and it was past 7 o’clock by the time she got home. When Pang Shuisheng saw her walk inside, he asked a bit urgently, “Qian Qian, were you together with Mingxi?”

Pang Qian looked at him with surprise. “No. Today is Thursday. I had practice.”

“Then do you know where Mingxi went?”

“Gu Mingxi? He left right after school ended. I saw him leave around 5:30.”

Pang Shuisheng spoke into the phone receiver, “I’ll tell his mom.”

Pang Qian ran over to her father and asked, “Dad, what’s wrong? Is Gu Mingxi missing?”

Pang Shuisheng dialed the number. “He’s usually home by 6:30, but he’s still not home yet, and he didn’t call or anything.”

Pang Qian was stupefied.

They weren’t in the mood for eating dinner, so they just ate quickly and started waiting for a call.

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A bit past 8 o’clock, Pang Shuisheng couldn’t refrain himself from calling Li Han. She was waiting at home, not daring to go out, but Gu Mingxi still hadn’t



returned.”

Pang Shuisheng decided right then, “Stay at home, I’ll go out to look for him.”

After a moment’s hesitation, he asked, “What about Guoxiang?”

“He...” Li Han told the truth, “He didn’t come back.”

“Did you try calling his phone?”

“I did, it’s off.”

“...” Pang Shuisheng didn’t ask anymore. “I’ll bring my cellphone with me. If you get any news, call me. I’ll go out to look for Mingxi. Ah Han, don’t worry. Mingxi is a smart kid, nothing will happen to him.”

Seeing her father about to leave, Pang Qian grabbed the bike(?) keys. “Dad, I’ll go with you!”

Pang Shuisheng looked at her, “Why would you go?”

“I know the path that Gu Mingxi usually takes.” Pang Qian said anxiously, “There are some places you guys don’t know about!”

Pang Shuisheng thought about it. Seeing his daughter so firm about it, he said, “Be careful then.”

“Mm!”

Pang Shuisheng and Pang Qian biked to First High together. The seniors were still at school self studying. Pang Qian went inside the school and took a walk around, but didn’t even see a glimpse of Gu Mingxi.

After that, she suggested going to the park nearby the school. In the past, she often went there with Gu Mingxi.

The father-daughter pair walked into the park. The sky was already dark, so the people who exercised there and the vendors had already dispersed. Pang Qian rode her bike and called out, “Gu Mingxi! Gu Mingxi!”

Ten minutes later, they were certain that Gu Mingxi wasn’t there.

Pang Shuisheng asked Pang Qian about the route Gu Mingxi took. Pang Qian gave herself a smack on the head, “He definitely didn’t take the bus. He would have walked and then taken the 236 bus. You have to walk for half an hour, and



on the way is the machinery factory!”

“Machinery factory?” Pang Shiusheng pondered for a moment, then said, “Then let’s follow the path he usually takes. We can ask anyone we see about it. Gu Mingxi doesn’t have arms, so perhaps someone took note of him.”

Pang Qian followed her father as they walked along the road, searching. She started calling out his name, “Gu Mingxi! Gu Mingxi—”

They asked a few shop owners along the way. Some said that they hadn’t seen any such person, while others said that they had some impression of seeing him. This armless boy would often walk through the area with his backpack on his back, but today, no one had seen a trace of him.

The two of them passed through the factory area, riding their bikes to the 263 bus stop. Pang Qian pushed her bike to the side of the road and looked around. It was already 9:30 at night. Gu Mingxi hadn’t gone home, so where did he go?

Pang Shiusheng lifted his hand to wipe at his daughter’s eyes. “What are you crying for.”

After her father said it, Pang Qian couldn’t hold back, and started crying out loudly.

She was deathly afraid. This was something that had never happened before. The factory area here was very disorderly. There were thieves and hooligans everywhere. Gang wars often happened there. The news even broadcasted that someone had been killed there before.

Her Gu Mingxi just disappeared like that, without saying anything. In the past, when it rained, the teacher kept him, or he was dragged out by Pang Qian, he could always find a public phone to call home and let them know he was safe. He was the most well-behaved, obedient student that everyone was reassured of. He was a good kid, never before disappearing without a word.

Pang Qian was wailing at the side of the road. Pang Shuisheng snapped at her loudly, telling her to bike around and check again. After five minutes his cellphone rang.

Li Han told him that Gu Mingxi had gone home.



Pang Shuisheng heaved a heavy sigh. He turned to see his tearful daughter and said, “Mingxi’s returned home safely. Let’s go home too.”

Pang Shuisheng told Pang Qian that the reason Gu Mingxi gave for getting home late was that he suddenly wanted to go to Xinhua Bookstore to read. He was reading and forgot the time, so he was late returning home. Li Han and Pang Shuisheng both believed Gu Mingxi, but Pang Qian didn’t believe it one bit.

That night, Pang Qian was working on her homework until 1:30 in the morning. She nearly fell asleep on her desk. When the sky lit up, she drowsily got out of bed and rode her bike to school.

Gu Mingxi was already in his seat. After Pang Qian saw him, she dropped her bag onto her desk and plopped down into her chair. She pulled out her notebooks and pens with a clamor.

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, but didn’t say anything.

The entire morning long, neither of them spoke to the other. Even during English class, when Teacher Dai wanted everyone to practice speaking with their partners, Pang Qian pretended not to hear. She just laid on her desk and poked at her notebook with a pen.

Poke, poke, poke. Poke, poke, poke. Her notebook was full of little holes. Gu Mingxi just watched on beside her. Then he lowered his head and started reciting English on his own.

Hearing his fluent pronunciation, Pang Qian grew even more depressed.

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After the morning classes, as everyone was preparing to head to lunch, Gu Mingxi pulled out his lunch box/tray and put it onto his desk. Then he pulled out his meal card, raised his leg up, and bit onto the card. He got up and bent over to grab his meal box between his shoulder and cheek. Then he straightened up and walked out of the room on his own.

Pang Qian stared after him, thoroughly dumfounded.

What was this?! Was he really blaming someone else when he was the one at fault? Gu Mingxi was actually throwing a tantrum!



But what kind of tantrum was he throwing?! She, Pang Qian, hadn't even looked for him to explain himself!

Pang Qian grabbed her meal box and chased after him to the cafeteria. Gu Mingxi was already in line. He stood up straight, his head bent to hold his tray between his cheek and shoulder. Pang Qian silently joined the line behind him, glaring at the back of his head.

When Gu Mingxi reached the front of the line, he bent over slightly and released his hold of the tray, placing it onto the counter. Then he put down the meal card from his mouth on top of the tray, and started picking out his dishes.

Someone ran quickly past Pang Qian, her braids swinging about behind her.

The cook placed Gu Mingxi's filled-up tray back on the counter and swiped his meal card. Gu Mingxi bent over and bit back onto the meal card. As he was thinking about how he would carry his meal box, Jiang Zhiya picked up the box from the window counter.

"Gu Mingxi, I'll help you," she said sweetly.

Gu Mingxi was biting onto his meal card, so he couldn't say anything. Jiang Zhiya tenderly plucked the meal card from his mouth, and Gu Mingxi said quietly, "Thanks."

They passed by Pang Qian, and Gu Mingxi lowered his head. Pang Qian looked at him silently, then stepped out of line and blocked his path.

"Gu Mingxi," Pang Qian called out. Gu Mingxi stopped in his tracks, and looked at her silently.

Pang Qian said, "I want to eat stir-fried noodles. Will you go out to eat with me?"

Gu Mingxi answered calmly, "I already got my lunch."

"You can take it home later and warm it up, and eat it later."

"Then it won't be fresh."

"Then just throw it away!"

"Wasting food is bad."



Pang Qian's eyes reddened. "What's wrong with you?"

She looked at him with an upset expression. She asked again, "Gu Mingxi, what's wrong with you?"

Gu Mingxi lowered his head again. "Nothing's wrong. I'm going to eat."

Jiang Zhiya was still holding Gu Mingxi's lunch box, standing to the side. Gu Mingxi walked past Pang Qian. Because the lunch line area was narrow, his empty sleeves brushed over Pang Qian's stiff arms.

Pang Qian only had one thought left in her mind: Oh no, Gu Mingxi had gone crazy.

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# Chapter 48

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 48 Rebellious Heart

*Gu Mingxi! What are you doing?!*

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Gu Mingxi sat at the side of the schoolyard looking down the stands. The rest of his class was in gym class. The girls were practicing sit-ups under the teacher's supervision, and the boys were playing basketball on the court.

Pang Qian grimaced as one minute passed, and she heard Li Xiaoyan report, "41."

She got up from the mat and switched spots with Li Xiaoyan. Pang Qian sat down onto her feet and held onto her knees.

From where she sat, she could very clearly see Gu Mingxi sitting in the stands. And so, she didn't pay much attention to keeping count for poor Li Xiaoyan.

Her head was full of thoughts about Gu Mingxi. What exactly was wrong with Gu Mingxi? Did his parents quarrel again? Or did the girl he liked reject him? Or did someone bully him? Was he unhappy? Or was Gu Mingxi still concerned about the TV program?

In any case, Gu Mingxi had never acted this strangely before. It was as if he'd gone crazy.

Of course, Gu Mingxi hadn't gone crazy. He was just...

How do you say it. He just felt kind of tired.

That nerve in his mind has been stretched for many years now, day and night, in every moment. A small idea and plan started to sprout inside his head. He got up everyday at 6 o'clock, took care of his daily needs, spent an hour to get to school, worked hard all day at school, and used his free class to help tutor Pang



Qian. When he got home, he didn't watch TV, he didn't read the newspaper. After he ate dinner, he returned to his room to do his homework. When he finished the assignments from the teacher, he would self-study until 12 o'clock, and then he'd go to sleep.

He practiced using the computer every day for an hour, but he never played games. Gu Guoxiang didn't allow him to, so he just didn't. At most, when he was itching to, he'd play a game of minesweeper.

When the weekend came, he went to his drawing class. When he got home, he'd practice drawing some more. He worked on practice problems and memorized English. In the past, Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song would call him and invite him out to play soccer/football. Gu Mingxi really wanted to go, but his parents didn't let him go. It was too far away, a waste of time, and playing ball wasn't safe. After a few more times, they stopped inviting Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi missed living at the Golden Compound. Pang Qian lived next door, so when he was bored on the weekends, they would go out together. Even if they didn't go outside, they could play at each others' houses, chat about, read comics, eat ice cream together.

When Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin invited Gu Mingxi to play, he would call Pang Qian along. Pang Qian would complain about it being a bother, but she never refused.

Her job was to help Gu Mingxi put on his sports shoes, feed him water, help him wipe away his sweat. And when they went home, Gu Mingxi would reward her with a small snack or meal.

But now, they lived at opposite ends of the city. Gu Mingxi felt much lonelier.

In the past, Gu Mingxi would always be mindful of his parents' demands of him. Gu Guoxiang wanted him to get into a 211 or 985 university (top schools), and he wanted him to keep his position in the top 3 of his year. Now, Gu Mingxi suddenly felt that there was no point to all the efforts that he put in.

He did his best to keep his spot in the top 3, but so what? Even if he could score well enough to get into a 985 school later on, so what? He didn't have arms, so getting into the school itself was uncertain. If he got into the school, he also didn't know how things would work when he had to take care of himself on



his own. Look, he couldn't even get his lunch on his own in the cafeteria. Gu Mingxi felt that to some extent, he relied too heavily on Pang Qian.

That's when he met Shark, Clam, and Oyster. They let him enter an entirely different world.

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That evening, at Shark's barbecue shop, Oyster's girlfriend came over, looking for him to play. That girl was only 17 years old, just older than Gu Mingxi by two months, but she was working at a nearby shoe factory. She and Oyster were often stuck together, kissing, wrapped around each other's waists, and showing other lovey dovey signs of affection. Gu Mingxi had even seen Oyster grab at the girl's chest, and his face turned bright red. When he looked around at the others, he saw that they'd already grown accustomed to it.

Clam and Oyster weren't much older than Gu Mingxi. Clam studied up until the second year of high school. His family ran out of money, so he dropped out and started working. Oyster graduated from a technical high school and had been working for two years already.

They didn't have much educational background, but they were living well and happily.

Then Gu Mingxi thought about Xie Yi. When they were in junior high, Xie Yi and his test scores were pretty matched, but now Xie Yi's scores had dropped a lot. His rank would probably only be in the middle of the year. But anyone could see, Xie Yi was a happy guy.

For him, studying was an enjoyment, a pastime. It wasn't something that chained him down or oppressed him. Just like when he played ping pong, when he played violin, when he participated in the comic convention. Everything he did was by his own will. I like it, so I'll do it. I don't like it, so no one can force me to do it.

Gu Mingxi wondered why he couldn't be like Xie Yi, so free and unaffected. Why was he so tied up on his scores and his ranking? In the last midterm exams, his score was only 2 points higher than the person in 4th place. He was really nervous about it, so he spent all night working on a pile of practice problems. When he thought about it now, it was really foolish.



Even if he got into the nation's best university, so what? He still wouldn't bring pride to his family. He would never be the outstanding child his parents could boast about.

Because he was crippled.

Even if he and a girl were together, no matter how well they got along, he still wouldn't become the prince in her heart.

Because he was crippled.

He recalled his appearance on TV. His legs lifted up on the desk, his toes holding chopsticks to send into his mouth. He wasn't pitiful, but it really was a bit laughable.

Gu Mingxi ah, he told himself. You've been tiring yourself out for all these years, why don't you take a break.

When Youth Day came on May 4th, he really received the Excellence Award for his district. Teacher Dai went with him to receive the award. When they were giving out the award certificates, all the other students went to receive it on their own. Gu Mingxi was the only one who had someone accompany him to the stage.

Teacher Dai helped him hold the red certificate booklet, and she clutched his shoulder for a picture. Gu Mingxi looked expressionlessly into the camera, his eyes deep and dark.

It was May, and his grades were dropping.

His cold war with Pang Qian was over, and he spoke to her. But that feeling, and maybe Pang Qian was just reading into things wrongly, made Pang Qian think that Gu Mingxi had become a completely different person.

When he spoke, his tone had become a lot more detached. Even when Pang Qian asked him about a question in class, his answer would be brief. If she didn't understand after he explained once, he would said, "I'm not good at explaining. You should ask the teacher."

Sometimes he wouldn't even go to the self-study classes. He carried his backpack and left the school campus, but he also didn't head straight home.



Every single time, he would drag out the time until it was 8 or 9 in the evening, before he arrived home. Then he would brush Li Han off with a lame excuse.

Li Han called Pang Shuisheng, and Pang Shuisheng went to ask Pang Qian. She was also confused about it. She didn't know where Gu Mingxi went off to after school. She asked him, but he just impatiently told her that it was none of her business. She even tried to follow him, but was found out very quickly.

At the time, Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian coldly, "It's very disorderly ahead. You should stop following."

After he said that, he turned away and walked off. Pang Qian wouldn't be scared off like that though, so she kept following. Gu Mingxi ignored her. He kept walking until the 263 bus stop, and then got on the bus to go home, leaving a stunned Pang Qian standing by herself.

Over the weekend, Gu Mingxi carried his sketchpad out of the house, but he didn't head to his drawing teacher's studio. Instead, he got onto the bus and headed to the machinery factory.

He familiarly walked into an internet cafe. The manager there saw him and said, "Xiao Gu's here. Clam and Oyster are already waiting for you inside. Number 49."

Gu Mingxi asked, "How much money is left on my card?"

The manager checked and said, "Oh, quite a bit. Don't worry."

Gu Mingxi nodded. He found machine 49. Clam and Oyster had on their headsets and were playing a game. A colorful battle was displayed on the screen.

Gu Mingxi wriggled his shoulders and put down his sketchpad. He sat down and lifted his foot to turn on the computer. He typed in his username and password, and started up the game skillfully. He grabbed the headset with his toes and put them on, then started playing the game with everyone else.

Clam lit a cigarette and handed one to Oyster. He turned around and asked Gu Mingxi, "Xiao Gu, want one?"

Gu Mingxi stared at the cigarette in his hand. He swallowed, then finally shook his head.



Oyster said, “Don’t give Xiao Gu a cigarette. Shark said not to let him smoke.”

Clam said, “Just don’t let Shark know then.”

Gu Mingxi was silent the whole time. His attention was entirely focused on the game world on his screen. His two feet were raised up on the desk. His right foot deftly pressed on the mouse, and would occasionally join his left foot to press the keyboard shortcuts.

Playing games was very relaxing, and they didn’t take a toll on your mind. It was much easier than working on practice problems.

In the game, he was a muscular giant with a pair of strong arms. He could lift up a giant hammer to smash the monsters.

So refreshing.

Gu Mingxi stared at the screen. Really refreshing!

Clam saw the sketchpad that Gu Mingxi dropped onto the desk. He asked, “Xiao Gu, what’s that?”

“Sketchpad.”

“What’s it for?”

“Drawing.”

“You can draw?” Clam was amazed. “Do you have to go to class later?”

Gu Mingxi said coldly, “Not going.”

“Why not?”

“There’s no point.”

One unit test after another, Gu Mingxi’s scores dropped.

He worked on the problems as he felt like it. Sometimes he felt it was annoying, so he would stop doing them. In his head, he asked himself what the point was. He could do all of it anyway.

When he got the failing results of the unit test back, Teacher Dai asked Li Han to stop by the school.

Everyone could tell that Gu Mingxi did it on purpose. It wasn’t that he didn’t



understand, he just didn't study and take the test well. He didn't memorize his English, so he couldn't write any of the new words they'd learned. Li Han asked Gu Guoxiang to persuade Gu Mingxi, but when father and son sat together, they started to argue before anything could be said.

Gu Guoxiang was so angry that he wanted to beat Gu Mingxi, but he was held back by Li Han. He said, "Who are you creating this hopeless and reckless image for!? Is it for me to see? For your mom to see? Gu Mingxi, I'm telling you, whether you study or not is your own business. If you do a good job studying, then I can help arrange work for you in the future. But if you can't even put in this effort, if you come asking for food in the future— I won't care about you!"

Gu Mingxi looked at him stubbornly. He said, "Even if I need food, I wouldn't go asking you for it!"

"Mingxi!" Li Han cried out in surprise as she looked at her son. She couldn't understand it at all. It was only a month, but what happened to make Gu Mingxi change entirely?

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Xiao Yujing asked Pang Qian what was the matter with Gu Mingxi. Pang Qian said that she didn't know.

Teacher Dai asked Pang Qian whether Gu Mingxi had met any difficulties. Pang Qian said that she didn't know.

Even when she was at practice, Xie Yi asked Pang Qian whether Gu Mingxi's head had been flooded with water.

That's right, that's what Xie Yi said. "Has Gu Mingxi's brain been flooded with water? He failed the chemistry test? Our chemistry teacher said that your class' chemistry teacher had high blood pressure from how angry they were."

Pang Qian was silent awhile. Then she told Xie Yi what she thought about it. "I think that Gu Mingxi's made some bad friends."

"Hm?"

"He didn't tell me. He doesn't speak to me much these days. But sometimes I can smell cigarette smoke on him." Pang Qian's voice dropped, "After school, he seems to go to some place to play. I tried to follow him on my bike once, but he



slipped away.”

“Ah? That irregular?” Xie Yi’s gaze looked serious. “Crab, we can’t let him continue on this way. You should convince him.”

Pang Qian pouted. “He doesn’t even speak to me properly. He’s really fierce now. When I see him, I’m... a bit afraid.”

Xie Yi thought for a moment, then said, “Then we’ll have to figure something out.”

That day after school, Pang Qian had practice. She carried her ping pong paddle, and without a glance at Gu Mingxi, backpack on her back, she walked out of the classroom.

Gu Mingxi turned and watched her walk off and down the stairs.

He saw Pang Qian head to the gymnasium, then left school himself. Slowly, he walked to Shark’s barbecue shop.

It was summer so there was more business at his place. Shark added several tables to the restaurant and even pulled the TV set out. Gu Mingxi dropped his bag and sat down on a chair to watch TV.

Shark was busy with preparations at the side. He asked, “Kid, lately you seem to be coming here pretty frequently. Don’t you have final exams? You’re not busy with your studies?”

“Nope,” Gu Mingxi answered. “Shark, I have some money in my pocket. Take it out. It’s money for my meals.”

Shark got angry then. “I’m not asking you for money. I just think that you’re a student, so I don’t understand why you’re always holing up here after school. Don’t you have to work on your homework?”

“I finished all my homework at school,” Gu Mingxi said. “It’s comfy here, and it’s bothersome at home.”

Shark looked at him, then turned back to wash vegetables.

At 7 o’clock, the sky was already dark, and the barbecue shop was packed full of people. Oyster and Clam were at the grill, and Shark was in charge of serving and collecting payment. His mom was also there to help clean tables and wash



dishes.

Gu Mingxi sat at the side, watching TV and zoning out.

Oyster's girlfriend, Pearl, was also there. It was early June, and she was wearing a low-cut tank top and tight jeans, walking back and forth past Gu Mingxi.

Oyster secretly stepped out for a smoke, and with Pearl, they sat together next to Gu Mingxi. He lit the cigarette and took a puff, and then Pearl asked for a smoke. Oyster lit another one and handed it over to her.

Pearl smiled and asked Gu Mingxi, "Xiao Gu, want a smoke?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head.

Pearl looked at Gu Mingxi awhile, then inhaled her smoke, and blew out towards Gu Mingxi's face. Gu Mingxi wasn't paying attention, so he suddenly started coughing loudly. Pearl laughed, then brought her cigarette over to his lips. "Have a smoke. Try it."

Gu Mingxi turned away forcefully, avoiding from her hand.

Just then, a girl appeared at his side, and cried out furiously, "Gu Mingxi! What are you doing?!"

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# Chapter 49

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 49 My Business or Not

*We'll get into the same university, like we said before.*

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Gu Mingxi lifted his head to see Pang Qian's furious face. Not far behind her was Xie Yi, dragging along his bike. And Pang Qian's bike had fallen to the floor.

It was obvious that she hadn't even properly parked her bike before running over.

Gu Mingxi felt a sudden moment of panic that turned into irritation. He stood up and walked outside. Then he remembered that he hadn't picked up his backpack, and he turned back.

But Pang Qian was quicker. She'd already picked up his bag and was holding it in her arms. She took a few steps back, a pair of eyes glaring at Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi twitched his shoulders, and the short sleeves of his t-shirt swung back and forth. "Give me my backpack."

"No!" Pang Qian looked at him, then glanced to Oyster and Pearl at the side. She was a bit scared, but her voice didn't shrink. "What are you doing? Why didn't you go home after school? The teacher gave a lot of homework today. Are you not going to do it? Gu Mingxi, you're even smoking!"

"I..." Gu Mingxi wanted to say that he didn't smoke, but then felt that explaining didn't really have any point. Instead, he said, "My business has nothing to do with you."

Pang Qian was stunned, her eyes quickly growing red. Everyone around them was watching, thinking that it was a lover's tiff between two students. Xie Yi parked his bike and walked over. He looked at Pang Qian, then looked at Gu Mingxi. "Gu Mingxi, Crab's been worried about you these days. What are you



doing?”

Gu Mingxi looked coldly at Xie Yi, “I said, my business has nothing to do with you two.”

“Gu Mingxi,” Pang Qian called out. Gu Mingxi’s gaze fell to her face as she said, “Final exams are right around the corner.”

“So what?” Gu Mingxi’s expression was cold as ice, and Pang Qian felt it was very unfamiliar. “Every semester has final exams. What’s so interesting about that?”

Pang Qian said, “You know that these exams are going to determine how the split the classes for next year. Each subject only has one fast class. I want to do well on the science exams so that we can keep being deskmates, but if you continue on this way, you won’t make it into the fast class!”

Gu Mingxi dropped his eyes, and after a long time, he said, “Fast class or slow class... I’m not at all interested in those kinds of things.”

Xie Yi looked at Gu Mingxi incredulously. Pang Qian’s eyes grew wet. She clutched tightly to Gu Mingxi’s bag, and in a trembling voice said, “Gu Mingxi, what’s wrong with you? Why did you suddenly stop studying? You don’t want to get into college anymore?”

“...”

“Tomorrow’s the physics unit test.” Pang Qian forced out a smile. “Gu Mingxi, get home earlier. It’s already late, and you still have to do your homework.”

Gu Mingxi stared at her and said, “I’ll decide whether I do my homework or if I’ll go home. You don’t have to worry.”

He’d never spoken to Pang Qian like this before. Pang Qian’s brows furrowed. She’d already endured this long enough.

She clenched her teeth and said, “Okay, you said it. Don’t regret it.”

When Pang Qian finished speaking, she carried Gu Mingxi’s backpack in her arms and ran over to her bike. She picked up the bike, stepped on, and tossed the backpack onto her back, her actions natural and smooth. Gu Mingxi and Xie Yi hadn’t yet reacted when Pang Qian already rode away swiftly on her bike.



Xie Yi hesitated a moment, then turned back to look at Gu Mingxi. Seeing his eyes full of worry, Xie Yi called out, "I'll chase after her. Don't worry, I'll send her home."

Gu Mingxi didn't respond.

Xie Yi got onto his bike, then turned back to Gu Mingxi again. His (Xie Yi) eyes were clear and frank, without a trace of contempt or resentment, nor pity and sympathy.

They were very friendly eyes, which made a guilty feeling rise up in Gu Mingxi's heart. When he faced Li Han, he never felt guilty. Right now though, a feeling of remorse was sprouting. But he didn't feel that he'd done anything wrong either. Xie Yi was this kind of carefree person. He, Gu Mingxi, was now living life in accordance with his wishes. He didn't want to go home, so he didn't. He didn't want to study, so he didn't. He didn't want to practice drawing, so he didn't. Just go to the internet cafe. That was fun and joyous, such an unrestrained life.

So why did he feel such anguish about it?

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Xie Yi already turned away and was riding his bike off. As Gu Mingxi watched his back, he thought, Xie Yi has to catch up to Pang Qian and send her home safely.

After all the shop patrons watched this scene wrap up, they returned to their chattering. Gu Mingxi didn't have his backpack anymore. He wasn't sure if he should stay or go. Clam showed up next to him and asked curiously, "Xiao Gu, was that girl your girlfriend?"

Pearl continued the questioning, "Xiao Gu, did you fight with your girlfriend? And who was that boy just then? He was really pretty."

"Pretty, my ass." Hearing his girlfriend praising another boy, Oyster felt unhappy. "That guy looked like such a dandy, nowhere near as cool as our Xiao Gu."

Clam chimed in. "I think Xiao Gu's better looking too. And Xiao Gu's girlfriend was pretty cute too."

Unknown to them, Shark had stood up and walked up behind them. He gave



Clam and Oyster a knock on the back of their heads, “You guys are free? Don’t have to grill anything? Am I paying you two to sit here and talk?!”

Oyster and Clam walked dejectedly back to the grill. Then Shark also rapped the back of Gu Mingxi’s head. With a “pa” sound, Gu Mingxi’s whole face wrinkled. That was the first time Shark had ever hit him. He grabbed the back of Gu Mingxi’s shirt collar and said, “Kid, come take a walk with me. There’s something I need to ask you about.”

Shark was from this area. He lived with his mother in a nearby, small, self-constructed three-story building. He and his mother lived on the third floor, and he gave the second floor to Clam and Oyster.

There was no one at the house at night, so Shark pulled Gu Mingxi by the collar over and pushed him inside. Then he knocked him on the head again. Shark was very strong to Gu Mingxi was nearly knocked over. After staggering a few steps, he finally found his balance again.

He turned to look at Shark, eyes carrying a wronged look. Shark turned on the light and closed the door firmly. He glared at Gu Mingxi and shouted strictly, “Sit down!”

Gu Mingxi didn’t resist, and sat down in the chair.

Shark pulled another chair over and sat down in front of Gu Mingxi. He said, “I saw what just happened, but I intentionally didn’t make an entrance. Explain to me what’s going on.”

“...” Gu Mingxi lowered his head. He was wearing flip flops, and his toes clenched together habitually. He wasn’t sure how to respond to Shark. If he started from the beginning, that would take more than an hour.

Shark seemed to understand what he was thinking. He lit a cigarette and said, “What I have today is time. If you don’t explain things clearly, I’m not letting you go.”

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at him, and suddenly asked, “Shark, if, and I’m saying if, you didn’t know me, would you let someone like me work in your barbecue shop?”

“Doing what kind of work? Skewering meat, grilling chicken wings? You’re



kidding me!”

Shark snickered. “Kid, don’t think that I don’t know what you’re thinking. I’ve eaten more salt than you’ve eaten rice (he’s experienced much more). You lost your arms do you think you’re pretty bad off, right? Let me tell you, I had a good friend that I grew up with. When he was 19, he was killed because of a gang fight.”

He pointed outside. “Right there, by the third alley. He had started college that year. In our group of kids who grew up together, he was the only one to make it into college. I don’t know how that gang fight started either, but in any case, out of nowhere, he died. Do you know what it means to die? It means you’re gone, that there’s nothing left! It’s been nearly ten years now. Every year at Qingming (also known as “tomb sweeping day”), I burn a cigarette and pour some wine for him. Kid, you know, when I see you, I think of him. My friend was very handsome, he was smart, but now he’s gone. Right now, I really feel that you only get one lifetime. Your life is the most important thing. As long as you’re alive, anything can go. Whether you’re living well or poorly, that depends on your own abilities. You’re still in school now. Even if you don’t have arms, I can tell from your clothes that your family is well off enough. Were you thinking from your toes or your ass when you thought about coming to work here? Is this your dream? Is this all you can hope for? Are you comparing yourself to those brats, Clam and Oyster? Don’t you ever say that kind of crap to me, like ‘I can’t even grill food, so what else can I do?’ Fuck all that! All this talk is making my mouth dry.”

Shark went to the kitchen to get a bottle of chilled beer and a can of cola. He used his teeth to open his beer and pulled out a bag of straws from a box. He put a straw into the can of cola and placed it in front of Gu Mingxi.

Shark gulped down half his bottle of beer, and after belching, he said, “Kid, you better get this straight. If you don’t study, then there really is nothing you can do. If you were to grill food, the customers would all complain that your feet are smelly. But if you study and do well in school, you can sit in an office. You can use a computer, call people, speak in English. You’ll have assistants to help you. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“I understand, but...” Gu Mingxi looked to his empty sleeves. “But I feel like,



even if I do well in school, that doesn't mean I'll be able to get a good job."

"You haven't tried, so how can you know?"

"Shark." Gu Mingxi let out a sigh. "Have I never told you about my situation?"

"Nope. I said I have time today. Come on then, talk."

Gu Mingxi took a deep breath, then told Shark about his family situation, including his father's affair, his parents' quarrel, the shame his father feels about him, and his deep wish to be able to have another, healthy child.

He even spoke about Pang Qian. Shark recalled the girl he saw, hair tied up in a ponytail, with a tender face. When she stared at Gu Mingxi and then started crying, before she held back her tears.

Gu Mingxi spoke for a long time, his tone very even. When he finished, he looked to Shark and said, "Shark, I never used to feel that I was a disgrace. Although my dad always thought that I was an embarrassment to him, I never felt that way. But now, I keep feeling, more and more... That I'm not really like you guys. Even if I study well, it can't change the way people look at me. So I feel like studying has no point. I feel like, even if I get into a good college later, it won't do anything."

Then he went silent, and Shark didn't speak up either.

The two of them sat there like that for a few minutes. Then Shark said, "You only just now realized that you're different? You just realized that you're missing two arms? Now that you know, that's more reason for you to figure how to deal with it! Otherwise, you're just going to live poorly? Kid, if you don't grasp at all the chances now, don't even mention getting into college, you won't even be able to sell watermelons later! And that girlfriend of yours is going to run off with that pretty boy!"

Gu Mingxi's face immediately blushed. "She's not my girlfriend."

"Do you dare say that you don't like her?"

"But she doesn't like me!"

"Kid, ey..." Shark let out a sigh, then pat Gu Mingxi's shoulder. "Let's go. I'll send you home. You can think about it on your own. I'm not saying that you



can't come back to hang out at my place. When it's summer, come all you want. But before the final exams this month, I don't want to see you again."

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Gu Mingxi went home without his bag. Li Han asked, "Where's your backpack?"

Gu Mingxi said, "I finished my homework at school, so I didn't bring it back."

Half an hour later, he went to the living room and secretly called Pang Qian. Pang Shuisheng answered the phone and Gu Mingxi said, "Uncle, can Pang Qian come to the phone?"

Pang Shuisheng called her, and finally responded with, "The girl's gone crazy. She won't answer the phone."

Gu Mingxi said, "Oh, then it's okay. It's nothing. I'll talk to her tomorrow at school."

The next day, Gu Mingxi arrived to school without anything. When he walked into the classroom, he saw Pang Qian sitting at her desk reading English.

Gu Mingxi walked over to her and sat down. His desk was empty, his drawer was also empty. He bent over to search. He even checked the trashcan in the back of the room. When he walked back, he said in a low voice, "Pang Pang."

Pang Qian turned her head, ignoring him.

Gu Mingxi asked, "Where's my backpack?"

"..."

"Pang Pang..."

"Didn't you say that your business has nothing to do with me? Why are you asking me about your backpack?" Pang Qian rolled her eyes, "Your backpack's already gone."

Gu Mingxi's eyes opened wide. "Gone?"

"It's gone." Pang Qian lifted her chin and looked to him. "Didn't you want to stop studying? What do you need a backpack for?! Go back to your barbecue shop and smoke. Go back and play with that girl!"



“I didn’t smoke,” Gu Mingxi said. “I wasn’t playing with any girls.”

“Don’t act like I didn’t see it!” Pang Qian clenched her teeth. “I saw you laughing and talking with that girl. She held the cigarette for you to smoke.”

“I really didn’t smoke, not even one,” Gu Mingxi explained. “Pang Pang, I know you didn’t get rid of my backpack. Where is it?”

“I got rid of it.”

“...” Gu Mingxi moved to his last resort. “Then I’ll go. I don’t have a backpack, so what’s the point of going to class.”

He really stood up to leave. Pang Qian got anxious and grabbed onto the back of his clothes, pulling Gu Mingxi back.

Gu Mingxi sat back down and looked at her, not saying anything.

Pang Qian said, “Promise me that you’ll go to class properly.”

He looked into her eyes and nodded his head.

“You’ll study and do well on your exams.”

“Mm.”

“We’ll get into the same university, like we said before.”

His heart jumped, then he nodded again.

“You can’t smoke again.”

Gu Mingxi heaved a sigh. “I really didn’t smoke.”

Pang Qian scoffed at him. “Who would believe that? Don’t you know how heavy the smoke smell on your clothes is? So stinky!”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 50

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 50 That Summer

*Hey! Everyone, get Gu Mingxi!*

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Gu Mingxi followed Pang Qian to the Class 8 classroom downstairs. Xie Yi walked out with Gu Mingxi's backpack, smiling slightly. Gu Mingxi looked at him and his face reddened a bit.

Pang Qian's face was still sour. She took Gu Mingxi's backpack and put it onto her back. "Thanks."

Xie Yi smiled, "You're welcome."

On the stairs, Gu Mingxi quietly bent his head and sniffed his shirt collar. He'd showered and changed his clothes, so there was no scent of cigarettes on him. He lifted his head and looked at the girl's back. She was carrying his backpack. As she walked, there was a bounce to her step, and her ponytail swept from side to side.

For more than a month, he hadn't had the chance to look at her like this. Although the two of them were deskmates, after class was over, Gu Mingxi always felt unsettled. He felt that classes were annoying, exams were annoying, teachers were annoying, and even Pang Qian was annoying. During math class, they had to use set squares (triangular rulers), protractors, and compasses. In the past, this wasn't a problem for Gu Mingxi, but during this period, he was always impatient and even angry about something.

Other people had arms, so drawing was easy for them. He had to use his feet to use these tools, so inevitably, there were times that he wouldn't be able to draw well. He started to wonder, why did he have to draw these things? Why did he have to work on these exercise problems? How did it relate to his job in the



future, his life in the future? Why were others allowed to live freely and happily?

Gu Mingxi also wanted to be like Xie Yi, a boy who was free and untethered. But in the end, he'd become a hedgehog, hurting many of the people beside him. Yet, he didn't seem to feel any happier.

He sat on a bench with Pang Qian in the park. She said, "Gu Mingxi, recently you've been acting unlike yourself. I started to suspect that you'd been possessed by something."

Gu Mingxi dropped his head and didn't respond.

Something cold suddenly appeared next to his mouth. With recognition, he sucked at it. A slightly sour, slightly sweet popsicle entered his mouth. In this summer season, it was a very satisfying feeling.

Pang Qian had a popsicle in both hands. As she ate one, she fed the other to Gu Mingxi. She looked off towards the lively vendors and the kids gathering around the stalls to buy food. She couldn't help but remember when she was in primary school.

At that time, when she and Gu Mingxi headed home, she would always drag him to go buy food to eat. He didn't have arms, which meant eating snacks as he walked wasn't very convenient, so he wasn't happy about it. Pang Qian would just pat her own chest and say, "I'll feed you!"

She kept feeding him snacks. From primary school to junior high, from junior high to high school. Pang Qian had never seen Gu Mingxi eat food from any other classmates' hands before, and it was rare that someone else held his water for him. She was much the same. In all her years, she'd never fed food to anyone but Gu Mingxi.

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"Gu Mingxi, do you think it would be good for me to study science?" Pang Qian took a bit on her popsicle. She turned her head to look at Gu Mingxi, "Actually, my scores for history and politics are a bit better than for science, but I hate memorizing things."

Gu Mingxi would definitely study science. Politics was his weakest subject. Their exams required so much writing, and since he wrote with his feet, he



always felt rushed for time. After every major literature, history, or politics exam, his back would feel sore. His toes were sore, and his foot hurt from being bent for so long.

He asked Pang Qian, “Do you like physics and chemistry?”

“They’re okay,” Pang Qian said. “I still think they’re kind of hard, but if I had to choose between them and memorizing history and politics, I would definitely choose physics and chemistry.”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “Then study science.”

Pang Qian put the popsicle in front of him again, and he obediently took a bite. He heard her ask, “But what if I can’t get into the fast class?”

Gu Mingxi lifted his eyes and looked at Pang Qian.

Pang Qian said quietly, “I’m only ranked 300 something in our year. It’s not like with getting into high school, when the school could split classes however they liked. They were able to make us deskmates through some backdoor deals. But to make it fair, they’re making all the results public this time. If I got into the fast class unofficially, people would definitely be very upset.”

Gu Mingxi knew that what Pang Qian said was true. With her scores putting her at the tail end of Class 2, it was very unlikely that she’d be able to get into the only fast class.

He suddenly felt a bit worried. He couldn’t imagine the next two years without Pang Qian sitting next to him. In all his classes, there would be no sign of her.

They already weren’t neighbors anymore. If they couldn’t even be in the same class, Gu Mingxi felt that the distance between them would only grow greater.

He clenched his teeth and said, “I’ll plead with Teacher Dai, to let her find a way for you to keep being my deskmate.”

“No, don’t. Making such an exception is really pointless. That way, I’m guaranteed to be last in the class! My dad would scold me after every single parent-teacher meeting. That’s really too scary.” Depressed, Pang Qian took another bite of her popsicle. Then, in a relieved tone, “Actually, Gu Mingxi, I thought about it later, and when you were deskmates with Xiao Yujing for the TV



program, that was pretty good. You both get good grades. She won't bother you about questions she doesn't understand. If you find something you don't understand, you can discuss it together. In any case, the two of you being deskmates is definitely better for you than the two of us being deskmates. Who knows, maybe you've always been coming in 3rd because I've been holding back your progress."

"That's not true," Gu Mingxi looked at her glumly. "If you can't get into the fast class, why don't I drop down to another class. Whether your studies are good or bad depends on the person. Look, we graduated from Origin of Flight, and everyone calls that school garbage. But you and I, and Xie Yi, have all done pretty well, right?"

"You've gone crazy! You, going to a slow class? Don't be so silly again." Pang Qian reached out and pushed Gu Mingxi to the side. She suddenly said, "Gu Mingxi, let's go to college in Shanghai together."

"Huh?"

"I really like Shanghai." Pang Qian turned to look at him. "Last time we went to Shanghai, I just felt it was really awesome."

Gu Mingxi smiled at her and asked, "Is there a school you want to go to?"

Pang Qian took a bite of her popsicle, her eyes shining. "There is! Fudan!"

That was probably the only prestigious university that she knew was in Shanghai. Gu Mingxi chortled. Pang Qian said unhappily, "What, you think I can't get in?"

Gu Mingxi's eyes curved and the corners of his lips curved up. He kicked Pang Qian lightly with his right foot. "Of course you can get it, of course. But Pang Pang, I'm worried that I won't be able to get in."

Gu Mingxi put his life on the line and studied for the final exams. In the end, he came out 9th in the whole year. That was enough to get him into the advanced science class.

Pang Qian did as usual and was ranked 355th in the end, which meant that she couldn't be deskmates with Gu Mingxi next year.



Over summer break, because Class 2 would be split up, Teacher Dai called all the students and organized a two day one night trip. They went to a scenic area on the outskirts of E City. Naturally, most of the class would participate. And of course, Pang Qian convinced Gu Mingxi to go.

When the big bus got to their destination, it was already noon. There were three teachers, and they organized lunch for more than 40 students. After lunch, they organized where everyone would be staying, and then everyone went to participate in river rafting.

It was summer so the temperature was hot. The towering trees and cool stream around them kept the temperature down significantly. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both had on orange life vests. It was thrilling as the boat bumped around, riding along the mountain stream. When there were particularly abrupt jolts, Pang Qian stuck right next to Gu Mingxi and even grabbed tightly to his waist.

She continuously screamed, causing classmates Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song to laugh out loud. Wang Song said to Gu Mingxi, "Little Crab knows that she'll be separated from you soon, so she's taking advantage of the rafting to get close to you!"

Gu Mingxi blushed, and Pang Qian got extremely angry. She immediately dipped her hand into the water and splashed at Wang Song.

After they came back from rafting, everyone was tired and thirsty. At a small shop, they bought drinks. And someone bought a small water gun, filled it up, and shot it towards the crowd. In that short moment, everyone was outraged and rushed back to the store, emptying out the entire shelf of water guns. Pang Qian held her gun, running back and forth. Whenever she saw someone, she would shoot at them, laughing joyously. Gu Mingxi kept running to keep up with her, but there was no way for him to play with the water guns. He saw how happy he was, a smile always plastered to her face. Then, for some reason, Pang Qian turned around and pointed her gun at him.

"Hey! Everyone, get Gu Mingxi!"

At her shout, 17 or 18 guns pointed at Gu Mingxi. He clearly had no way to dodge them all, so he just ran. Soon, he was soaked with water, looking like a drenched chicken.



After playing awhile, the group of students all dispersed.

There was only Pang Qian, still boldly standing beside Gu Mingxi. She held her stomach as she laughed out loud, while Gu Mingxi stood quietly staring at her.

Then Pang Qian walked over to him and poked him in the waist. “Hey, are you angry?”

Gu Mingxi turned his head away. His hair was soaked with water, so beads of water dripped off. His clothes were stuck to his body, and you could see him heaving slightly. He was clearly a bit out of breath.

Pang Qian picked up one of his dripping wet sleeves and squeezed it. Water flowed down and she said, “Sorry. Next time, I won’t joke around with you. Go to your room and change your clothes.”

They were all staying in a small village-y hostel. Four people stayed in each room. Because of Gu Mingxi’s condition, they specially arranged a single bed for him. He and Wang Song and Zhou Nanzhong stayed in one room together.

He went back to his room on his own to change his clothes. He didn’t feel very good inside. Gu Mingxi never thought that Pang Qian would bully him like that in front of so many people. And he hadn’t expected the entire class to go along with her.

They were obviously bullying him for not having arms. Gu Mingxi bend over and pulled out a dry shirt from his bag with his teeth. He hunched over and used his feet to pull off his wet pants. His underpants were also soaked through, so he felt even worse.

He trudged to the washroom with wet steps. After he wiped himself down, he changed into dry clothes. He sat on the edge of his bed for awhile, then bit onto his keys and headed back out.

The small guest house had a restaurant on the first floor. Gu Mingxi thought it was a bit odd. He remembered that when he went upstairs, all the window curtains had been open. It was bright and spacious inside, and the workers were cleaning there. But now, the stairs down were all dark. When he got to the ground floor, he saw that the curtains in the restaurant were all pulled closed.



The space was all dark and gloomy. And it was also dead silent.

Gu Mingxi looked around suspiciously. Just then, a door in the corner was pushed open, and a large group of people walked out. Gu Mingxi was startled, but when he took a second look, he saw that it was his classmates and teachers. Teacher Dai, Zhou Nanzhong, Wang Song, Xiao Yujing, Wu Min, Li Xiaoyan, Jiang Zhiya... They were clapping and singing as they walked toward him.

“Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to Gu Mingxi! Happy birthday to you!”

The one standing at the front was naturally Pang Qian. She was carrying a large birthday cake, with two number candles— “17.” With a bright smile on her face, she walked up to Gu Mingxi. She looked up at his face. “Although it’s not Qixi yet, but it’s your 17th birthday by the Western calendar. Gu Mingxi, happy birthday!”

Gu Mingxi looked at her as she stuck her tongue out at him. “Aiya, you can’t still be angry at me, right?!”

Gu Mingxi kept his lips tightly closed. Then after a moment, he laughed, revealing his two tiger teeth. He said quietly, “Thank you, Pang Pang.”

— My Mister Ostrich —

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# Chapter 51

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 51 African Drum

*You finally know what the Milk Way is.*

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The candlelight shined onto Pang Qian's youthful face. In front of her, Gu Mingxi closed his eyes and made a wish. Then he opened his eyes and blew out the candles.

His classmates all cheered out as Pang Qian cut the cake. Each student and teacher all got a piece. After the cake was distributed, she fed a piece to Gu Mingxi. In front of so many people, Gu Mingxi felt a bit embarrassed. But with Pang Qian's glimmering eyes staring at him, he finally opened his mouth and ate the cake off the fork.

Pang Qian giggled as she asked, "Does it taste good?"

Gu Mingxi looked a bit bashfully. He nodded, "Yeah."

Pang Qian was very pleased, "We did a good job acting! You didn't suspect anything at all, right?"

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Zhou Nanzhong pat Gu Mingxi's shoulder. "Bro, sorry about earlier when we sprayed you with the water guns. It was Crab's rotten idea."

"Rotten idea?! If we didn't do that, how could we trick Gu Mingxi to go to his room on his own?!" Pang Qian said with dissatisfaction. "All of Gu Mingxi's and my birthdays have been during summer break, so we've never celebrated with classmates before. It just happened that this trip happened at the same time as his birthday (on the Western calendar). So of course, I had to help him celebrate."



Wang Song teased her, “Crab, since you care so much about his birthday, during our bonfire party later, you should dance for Gu Mingxi.”

Pang Qian scoffed at him, “Fine, it’s just a dance. Who’s scared of that?”

After dinner, the staff lit up a bonfire in an open area and put on some music. The group of students sat down around the fire, and Jiang Zhiya, who was the arts and literature committee member and had a beautiful voice, led the group in a song.

A lot of people sang along with her. Later on, the music became more cheerful and several students bravely stood up, held hands, and danced together around the fire. As they danced, more people joined them. Even Teacher Dai was dragged in by Jiang Zhiya.

Since Pang Qian sat in the corner of the room and her grades were at the bottom of the class, she wasn’t very close with the rest of her class, just like when junior high first started. The people she was most friendly with were probably Zhou Nanzhong, Wang Song, and her physical education partner, Li Xiaoyan. But at that moment, against the light of the fire, seeing both the familiar and unfamiliar faces, Pang Qian felt very touched.

Most of Class 2’s students would continue on to the advanced class, except for eight of nine students, who would be split up into other classrooms. After this summer break, they’d go their separate ways. This might be the only time in their lives that they cross paths. Pang Qian turned to look at Gu Mingxi beside her. He sat with his knees up, chin on his knees, watching everyone else singing and dancing. As the flames danced and sparkled in his eyes, a slight smile on his lips, Pang Qian suddenly felt a tug at her heart.

She stood up and dusted off her bottom. “Gu Mingxi, let’s dance together.”

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at her, his eyes filled with uncertainty. Pang Qian pat his shoulders, “Get up, we’ll dance together.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t refuse again. He stood up and together with Pang Qian, walked into the circle of people. Pang Qian turned with the music and smiled as she said, “Come on, let’s dance. It’s easy.”

There was a very strong beat to the music, and everyone was holding hands



and kicking their legs around. Gu Mingxi watched them, but he really didn't know how he should dance.

Pang Qian stood beside him and without an explanation, she wrapped her left arm around Gu Mingxi's waist. Then she grabbed onto Li Xiaoyan, at the end of the line. Gu Mingxi suddenly felt like he was pulled to the side by Pang Qian, and then they were kicking their legs out.

One, two three, kick out the left foot. One, two, three, kick out the right foot.

At first, Gu Mingxi just walked along after Pang Qian, mechanically. But after a bit, he finally tried kicking a bit. Pang Qian was elated seeing him start to dance. Pang Qian smiled at Gu Mingxi, a particularly joyful smile, with her hand still around her waist.

Gu Mingxi's face reddened again. Fortunately, because of the fire, everyone was covered in sweat and no one took note of his emotions.

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At some point, a drum started sounding with the music. The drum sound was very particular as well. Sometimes it was low and solemn, and other times, it was exciting and rousing. The calm air would suddenly be filled with an explosive sound. Like the other students, Pang Qian turned back to search for the source of the sound, and then realized that it was Xiao Yujing playing the drum.

Her small frame was carrying a drum, though it wasn't very big. The drum body was like a trophy. There were drawings on it and some rope around it as well. Xiao Yujing hit the drum with her palms, her head swaying to the beat. The way she looked was very strange.

Pang Qian felt that Xiao Yujing was really too mystical, drumming as if intoxicated. She suddenly raised her eyes and met Pang Qian's gaze. Xiao Yujing smiled and then closed her eyes and continued to beat the drum.

As Xiao Yujing drummed on, Teacher Dai and Jiang Zhiya joined hands to make an archway. All the students lined up and walked through the "doorway." The moment that Xiao Yujing's drum stopped, Teacher Dai and Jiang Zhiya brought their hands down to catch a "fish."

Though it was a game of their childhood, everyone had fun playing. Pang Qian



and Gu Mingxi naturally participated as well. The whole time, Pang Qian rested her hands on Gu Mingxi's waist, pushing him as they played. Their luck was good though, as they were never caught. The "fish" who got caught had to put on a performance. A tide came when Wang Song was caught. He cleared his throat and suddenly turned to Li Xiaoyan, shouting out, "Li Xiaoyan! I like you! Will you go out with me?"

Li Xiaoyan's face turned completely red from embarrassment. All their classmates grew lively. Teacher Dai was young and didn't think this was the time to combat the students' fervor. So she just told Wang Song, "You'll be in my class again next semester. When the time comes, I'll deal with you!"

Pang Qian watched the scene unfolding and shouted out loud with the crowd. Then she leaned over to Gu Mingxi to gossip, "I'll bet with you, Li Xiaoyan won't agree to it."

Gu Mingxi asked, "Why?"

"I'll tell you later."

The boys started whistling and clapping, and the girls egged Li Xiaoyan on to agree. Li Xiaoyan didn't dare to state her position about it with Teacher Dai present, so she just turned and ran off.

Pang Qian said quietly, "See, I was right."

As everyone hissed and booed, Gu Mingxi asked Pang Qian curiously, "How were you so sure?"

Pang Qian naturally whispered into his ear, "Li Xiaoyan told me before that she liked you."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian started laughing. She looked up and saw that the staff was here to put out the fire, so she knew it was nearly time to head back to their rooms.

She made the most of the time left and dragged Gu Mingxi over to Xiao Yujing. Xiao Yujing was carrying her drum to leave when Pang Qian asked, "Xiao Yujing, that's a drum, right?"

"Yeah, it's called a djembe. It's a type of African drum. I brought it along when



I came back to China.” Xiao Yujing pat the face of the drum and it sounded with a boom, crisp and pleasant. “I heard there would be a bonfire today, so I brought it along. After we came back here, I’ve never had a chance to play it, since it would disturb the neighbors.”

Pang Qian’s eyes were filled with envy. “Can I try it once?”

“Of course.” Xiao Yujing brought the drum over to Pang Qian. Pang Qian said, “It’s kind of heavy.”

“Yeah, it’s made of wood.” Xiao Yujing helped her to put it on. Seeing Gu Mingxi, who’d been standing beside Pang Qian, she said, “Crab, try it out.”

Pang Qian tried using her hand to hit the drum face. Boom boom, boom boom, boom boom boom. “It’s so much fun,” she said. “Really, it’s so interesting.”

“Do you like it?” Xiao Yujing flicked her fingers. “I’ll give it to you.”

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Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi looked at her, dumbfounded.

Pang Qian scrambled to return the drum. “Aiya, don’t joke around. I’m just intrigued by it. It’s a drum you brought back from abroad.”

Xiao Yujing didn’t mind. “I knew you wouldn’t accept it. Actually, I haven’t played the drum in many years. This drum doesn’t have any meaning for me. If you don’t want it...” She suddenly turned to Gu Mingxi. “Why don’t I gift it to Gu Mingxi then. Today’s your birthday, so this is a birthday present. It’s old, so I hope you don’t mind.”

The drum was still in Pang Qian’s arms. Xiao Yujing hid her hands behind her and looked at the two of them with a smile. “Okay then. It’s so hot out. I’m going back to shower and sleep. I’ll go first. Goodnight.”

When she finished speaking, she went back to the guest house. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian looked at each other. Then Pang Qian lowered her head back to the drum in her arms. After staring for half a day, she said, “Gu Mingxi, you didn’t thank her.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“I still feel that this isn’t quite right.” Pang Qian felt awkward. “How about I go



return it to her later?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a second and then shook his head. “No need. The drum, you can have it.”

“Me?” Pang Qian was very startled. “Xiao Yujing said that it was a gift for you!”

Gu Mingxi stared at her. “What use would I have for a hand drum?”

“It would make a decent display too.”

“I think... Xiao Yujing really doesn’t care about it,” Gu Mingxi said. “She knew I would give the drum to you. And you really like it.”

Pang Qian frowned, “Please, I don’t like it that much...”

She thought, Xiao Yujing really was an odd girl.

The students trickled back to the guest house. Pang Qian carried the drum and walked back together with Gu Mingxi.

The leaves on the trees rustled in the wind. Pang Qian looked up at the vast sky that was hard to see back in the city. She suddenly brightened up and pointed upward, “Look, the Milky Way!”

Gu Mingxi looked up and smiled. “You finally know what the Milk Way is.”

“I asked Xie Yi,” Pang Qian said proudly. “He printed out some pictures for me to see and told me which part was the Milky Way. The computer at his house actually comes with a printer. In color too.”

Gu Mingxi’s face turned sour.

Pang Qian didn’t notice though. She happily continued, “By the way, Gu Mingxi, did you know? Next semester, I’ll be in the same class as Xie Yi again!”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 52

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 52 Indissoluble Interest

*I've known her for quite awhile. I really like her a lot.*

---

The delightful summer trip ended with a group photo.

Teacher Dai brought the students of Class 2 up a small mountain. A group of students huddled up all together, squeezing the three teachers in the middle of them. As they all laughed, they took their group photo.

Regardless of what they were doing, Pang Qian was always together with Gu Mingxi. Including when they took the photo. She was pressed right up to him, holding up a V sign, smiling as brightly as the sun shone in the sky.

Because they'd be in different classes the next semester, Pang Qian was a bit melancholic over the summer break. She had been classmates with Gu Mingxi for ten years, and deskmates for seven and a half of those years. Thinking about how they would have to walk into different classrooms at the start of the next school year, it would be a lie if Pang Qian said she said she was willing.

In the latter half of the summer break, while her parents had to work, Pang Qian went over to Gu Mingxi's house to play. Gu Mingxi stayed home by himself, so lunch time was a bit of a headache to think about. He told Pang Qian that when Li Han left for work, she would cook rice in the ricecooker and make one or two dishes to leave for Gu Mingxi to eat later.

Pang Qian said, "Then wouldn't everything be cold?"

Gu Mingxi smiled and responded, "It's summer. It's okay if they're cold, as long as the rice is warm. I can't cook meals, and having to heat things back up is rather troublesome."

Pang Qian looked at the microwave in his house and was speechless. She



wondered what Gu Guoxiang had thought when he put it there. If he put the microwave that high up, how could Gu Mingxi use it?

And so, Pang Qian volunteered to cook for Gu Mingxi. She pulled out a winter melon from the vegetable basket and picked up a knife to cut it up. As she was cutting, she kept her left hand far away from the knife, so one piece would be thick and then another thin. She seemed rather unfamiliar with the motions. Gu Mingxi watched from the side and then shook his head. He asked, “Pang Pang, can you cook?”

“I’ve watched my dad do it before,” Pang Qian said. “It seems to be pretty easy.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

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He lifted his foot and helped Pang Qian light the stove. After the oil heated up, Pang Qian dropped the cut up vegetables into the wok. There was a hissing, crackling sound, and then oil droplets burst out. Pang Qian was so scared that she jumped to hide behind Gu Mingxi.

The poor winter melon lied inside the wok, as Pang Qian poked at it with the spatula from afar. Gu Mingxi was afraid the melon would burn, so he said, “Forget it, let me do it. Help me add the seasoning.”

He stood in front of the stove, left foot on the floor, right leg raised up to the counter. He held the spatula with his toes and carefully started to stir-fry the winter melon. Because he didn’t have any hands to hold the wok handle, the wok was pushed to a slant. As he was stir-frying, a few pieces of winter melon fell out.

Pang Qian quipped up, “Hey, the winter melon’s falling out!”

“I know. It’s just a few pieces. It’s okay.” Gu Mingxi spoke calmly and he was standing very stably. His two empty shirtsleeves hung at his sides, as he used his foot to stir-fry the winter melon until it was glistening.

As he was cooking, he said, “Pang Pang, add salt.”

Pang Qian opened the salt container and scooped a spoon of salt. “Is this enough?”



Gu Mingxi glanced over at her, “Yeah, that’s fine. Add it in.”

A bit later, he said, “Add the MSG.”

“Is this enough?”

“Too much. Get rid of a third of it. Oh... That’s fine, add it in.”

And a bit after that, he turned off the fire and returned his right foot to the ground. He turned to Pang Qian, “Okay, help me plate it.”

After he cooked the winter melon, Gu Mingxi didn’t have any faith that Pang Qian would be able to cook tomato and eggs or seaweed and shrimp soup.

So the two of them ate the fried winter melon along with the edamame and sausage that Li Han had made, and also a bowl of rice.

Pang Qian tasted the stir-fried winter melon that Gu Mingxi made and said with surprise, “It tastes really good! You can actually cook!”

“If no one’s there to help me, I can’t do it.” Gu Mingxi smiled, “After all, I can only use one leg. And after cooking, I can’t plate the food either.”

“Then you have to make sure to find a wife who can cook in the future.” Pang Qian started to worry about Gu Mingxi. “Like your mom. Her food is really delicious. My mom won’t do though. The things she cook taste terrible.”

Gu Mingxi bit his lips and looked at her without responding.

Pang Qian ate a few mouthfuls of rice and then asked him, “Gu Mingxi, did your parents stop fighting?”

His bright and clear eyes suddenly went dim in that moment. He thought for a moment and then answered, “It’s true that they don’t fight. They don’t even talk to each other now.”

“Ah...”

“My dad often doesn’t come home.” Gu Mingxi picked up his chopsticks with his toes and poked around at the rice in his bowl. “Each week, there’s always three or four nights that he doesn’t come back.”

Pang Qian asked, “Where does he go?”

Gu Mingxi lifted his head and looked at her, “What do you think?”



Pang Qian didn't respond.

Although she was only 16 years old, she still had an inkling about the answer to that question.

She asked, "Will they get divorced?"

"I don't know." Gu Mingxi shook his head. "If they do, I'm definitely staying with my mom. But I don't wish that they'll get divorced."

Pang Qian was truly angry. "Your mom is so great. She's pretty and nice. Why is your dad this way?!"

"Actually, before we talk about whether there are some problems about how they feel about each other, the way my dad treats me can't be considered bad. He supplies food and clothes for me, he sends me to school. On the weekends, I can even go to art lessons. That's really expensive. Whenever there's something I want to buy, he usually won't reject. The spending money he gives me each month isn't little. But... He just won't go to a parent-teacher conference. And he won't go outside with me. He... He just can't accept that I'm disabled, and severely at that." Gu Mingxi smiled briefly as he continued, "Pang Pang, sometimes I wonder if my mom had taken advantage of her youth and had another child when I was first injured, if my dad had another child, he wouldn't think of leaving my mom now."

As Pang Qian listened to his words, she felt that something wasn't right. She recalled the words that Pang Shuisheng used to comfort Gu Mingxi over the New Year's. She said, "Gu Mingxi, their adult business has nothing to do with you. Don't overthink it."

"I'm not overthinking things. All I can do now is to spend more time with my mom." Gu Mingxi grinned. "I'm fine. It's a fact that my dad doesn't like me. It's also a fact that I don't have arms. I can't just keep pretending otherwise. Right now, I just want to get into a good university and a good major. Being able to take care of myself is also a way of helping my mom."

When Pang Qian left, Gu Mingxi insisted on sending her to the bus stop. The two of them walked, one in front of the other, down the road. Seeing him so glum, Pang Qian wanted to find an interesting topic to talk about.



She said, “Did you know, Li Xiaoyan called me a few days ago. She said that she agreed to go out with Wang Song.”

“Really?” Gu Mingxi smiled. “Then Wang Song must be extremely happy.”

“Yeah. But she told me not to tell anyone else, because she was afraid Teacher Dai would find out.”

Gu Mingxi raised his eyebrows. “But then you told me about it?”

“You’re not (just) anyone else.” Pang Qian giggled, and then lightly pat his back. “What is there that I hide from you? You’re the one who hides things from me.”

“What did I hide from you?”

“The girl that you like,” Pang Qian said. “It’s already been so long, but you still won’t introduce us. I don’t even know what her name is.”

“Pang Pang.” Gu Mingxi suddenly stopped in his tracks and called to her. Pang Qian turned around and looked at him. Under the beating sun, he was wearing a light blue shirt, shoulders out and back straight. His hair was choppy and his face was full of youthful spirit, with little beads of sweat covering his forehead. He’d long ago shed that tender boyish look he had several years before.

Gu Mingxi was already nearly 180cm tall, a great deal taller than Pang Qian. Standing in front of him, she had to lift her head to look at him. She heard him say, “Please forgive me, as I’m unable to introduce that girl to you. Because she very clearly told me that she likes another boy. Before she changes her mind, I definitely won’t let her know that I like her.”

He spoke very seriously and with a gentle gaze, enough to produce an illusion inside of Pang Qian. She actually felt a sour feeling inside. Realizing that Gu Mingxi had such a girl in his heard, Pang Qian really had mixed feelings.

What kind of girl was she? Was her hair as long as Jiang Zhiya’s? Were her eyes as big as Li Xiaoyan’s? Did she look as fresh and pure as Xiao Yujing, and was she as smart as her? She must be very special, gentle and pretty for Gu Mingxi to like her this much.

In any case, Pang Qian felt that she (herself) definitely wasn’t as good as her



(the girl GMX likes).

She pulled the corners of her lips up and smiled a strange smile. “Gu Mingxi, don’t exaggerate that much. How long have you known her? Can you really like her that much?”

Gu Mingxi looked deeply into her eyes, then nodded his head. “I’ve known her for quite awhile. I really like her a lot.”

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The second year of high school started. Pang Qian didn’t understand the way the school arranged things at all. Her classroom was at the most east end of the second floor. Gu Mingxi was in Year 2 Class 1 and his classroom was at the most west end of the fourth floor.

After heading into the school doors, they each took their own staircases. Between Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, one went east, the other west. Even when they were walking up and down the stairs, they’d rarely meet up.

Fortunately, she and Zheng Qiaoqiao were in the same class. Xie Yi and a few other ping pong members were also in their class. Pang Qian naturally sat together with Zheng Qiaoqiao. The two of them really hit it off, and after being deskmates, they grew even closer.

What made Pang Qian even happier was that she’d very casually taken the preliminary diagnostic exam, and when the results came out, her score actually put her in the middle of the class. That really made her ecstatic. Spending a year at the bottom of her class, never having scored better than 10th from the bottom, Pang Qian just tucked her head in and lived her days dejectedly. After the classes were rearranged, her test results really boosted her self-esteem, letting her know that she wasn’t really garbage.

When it was time for lunch, Pang Qian carried her lunch box to the entrance of the school building. Numerous students passed by her, but her sights were set on someone walking over. She immediately waved her hand and called out, “Gu Mingxi!”

Gu Mingxi’s head was bent over, holding his lunch box, and his meal card was in his mouth. Xiao Yujing was walking next to him, and after seeing Pang Qian, she smiled. She didn’t say anything, but just walked away.



Pang Qian took Gu Mingxi's lunch box and meal card. As if she were making a great gesture, she said, "Actually, you can eat with Xiao Yujing, you know."

Xiao Yujing was Gu Mingxi's new deskmate, and their head teacher was still Teacher Dai. Pang Qian felt that Teacher Dai was worried that Gu Mingxi would behave poorly again, so she found a way to supervise him again.

Gu Mingxi looked at her and said, "Really? Then I'll eat with Xiao Yujing tomorrow. She already told me, if you don't have time, she can help me get my meal."

"I was just saying." Pang Qian was a bit anxious for some reason. Then she called out brightly, "Gu Mingxi! On the diagnostic test, I scored 559 points! 32nd in the whole class! Hahaha... 32nd! Our class has 51 people!"

"How many points?"

"559!"

"Oh..." Gu Mingxi glanced at Pang Qian. "Pang Pang, are you sure you want to go to Fudan (University)? In our class, your score would probably be last."

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 53

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 53 Neighbor on the Left, You on the Right

*Starting next month, I'll tutor you again.*

---

He was showing off again!

Pang Qian was so angry that her teeth were itchy, and couldn't wait to give his meal box back to him. "Gu Mingxi, would it kill you to praise me a little?!"

Gu Mingxi couldn't see what praise Pang Qian deserved, so he blinked and said, "We can't really say anything from the diagnostic test, so we'll see when the midterms come around. Pang Pang, you have to try to make it into the top 150 of the year. That's the only way you'll have a chance at the top-tier universities."

Truth be told, at the time, Pang Qian didn't have much notion of the college entrance exams. She wasn't like Gu Mingxi, who had Gu Guoxiang to explain all those things to her. She only knew the difference between a bachelor's and associate's degree. First High wasn't the best high school either. Of the 440 students in the nine classes of the previous senior class, 120 got into a top-tier university. The majority of them were students in the advanced humanities classes. The next tier of schools admitted more than 150 of their students, and the third tier admitted more than 70 students. The remaining students could only continue on to get their associate degrees. There were even some whose scores were so low that they couldn't even get into unranked universities.

In Pang Qian's mind, anyone who could get into the four-year universities were amazing. Top 150 in the year? She didn't even dare to imagine that.

She went to the cafeteria with Gu Mingxi to order and eat their lunch. Afterwards, she went to the sink to clean their meal boxes. Then the two of them



returned to the school building. Pang Qian looked to the staircase on the left and said, "I'll help you carry it to the fourth floor."

"It's okay, I can carry it on my own." Gu Mingxi smiled at her. He shrugged his right shoulder and signaled for Pang Qian to place his meal box there.

Pang Qian felt a bit sad. For the entire, long day, she was only together with Gu Mingxi when they were eating. She would always chatter to him, and he would smile and listen. After lunch, they returned to their own classrooms and they didn't even see each other when school ended.

There was no one there to review questions with her during self-study period anymore. Pang Qian really wasn't used to it.

Gu Mingxi saw how downcast Pang Qian looked, so he asked, "Do you have practice today?"

Pang Qian shook her head, "No."

Gu Mingxi said, "Then after school, let's go to the Little Market to sit awhile. I'll treat you to some food, and then we can go home after eating."

Pang Qian stared at him, then her eyes bent and she smiled. She nodded, "Okay."

And so the second year of high school started like this. Gu Mingxi was in the advanced class, assembled with the year's best teachers and students. The pressure they had on their studies was very high. Spending the whole day writing made Gu Mingxi's feet hurt, and he could barely straighten his back anymore. He couldn't help thinking that if Pang Qian were left in this class, she'd probably get more and more unhappy.

Xiao Yujing sat next to Gu Mingxi, in the seat that used to be Pang Qian's. Xiao Yujing didn't speak much. She spent most of her time reading and working on practice problems. Every once in awhile, she'd take a break, cross her arms, and lie down on her desk. After zoning out a bit, she would nap a little.

With regards to any difficulties Gu Mingxi would face, she simply said, "Just tell me if there's anything you need help with. If you don't say anything, I'll just take it that you're doing fine."



So that's how things worked out. If Gu Mingxi ever asked for any help, she would immediately help him without another word. If he was immersed in his own things, Xiao Yujing just left him alone.

As for Pang Qian in Class 7, she was living life almost as a deity.

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There weren't any particularly outstanding students in her class. Since Pang Qian wasn't at the bottom of her class, the pressure she felt decreased a lot. Even someone as undisciplined in his studies as Xie Yi was ranked 5th in the class. Class 7's students were in different classes when they first started school at First High. Inevitably, everyone had their groups and cliques at the start, but after a month, they all got along pretty well. This was made better by the fact that Xie Yi was in their class, and he was simply wonderful at gathering all the boys and girls together.

When Xie Yi called, a hundred people would answer. Under his direction, even all the students who had never played ping pong before started to play. Xie Yi was a sports fanatic. Even after the China's team lost in the 2002 World Cup, he kept following it. He and some other boys would constantly talk about it in class.

There was a critical game that took place on the National Day (1 Oct). Xie Yi invited everyone to his house to watch it, and even the girls said they wanted to go. Although Pang Qian didn't understand much about sports, but she had always been interested in Xie Yi. She dragged Zheng Qiaoqiao over and said that the two of them wanted to go. Xie Yi didn't reject them, naturally.

That was the last day of the holiday break. That day, the second year students happily charged out after classes ended. Pang Qian pulled at Zheng Qiaoqiao and spoke excitedly. Then Zheng Qiaoqiao suddenly said, "Hey, Crab, there's Gu Mingxi."

Pang Qian turned and saw Gu Mingxi standing in the corner outside of their classroom, with his backpack on his back. She said to Zheng Qiaoqiao, "Go get your bike first and wait for me there. I'll be there soon."

The students in Gu Mingxi's class walked down the stairs in a clump. A lot of people looked at him curiously as they passed him. Pang Qian walked up to him, face full of excitement, as she asked, "Gu Mingxi, are you looking for me?"



“Where are you guys going?” He already had an idea. “Are you all going out to play together?”

“No, we’re going to Xie Yi’s house to watch a ball game,” Pang Qian said. “I told you before. They have their own separate house. I heard they have a really big living room and their TV is especially big. Watching the game will be very cool.”

Gu Mingxi frowned, “Since when did you like to watch ball games?”

“I...” Pang Qian’s face reddened. She said quietly, “I’m just tagging along for fun.”

Just then, Xie Yi and a few other boys came out. Seeing Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, he smiled and asked, “Gu Mingxi, Crab’s coming over to my house to watch a game. Do you want to come?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. “I’m not going. My house is pretty far away, so it’s not convenient to get back home at night.”

Xie Yi smiled and waved his hand. “Alright, then I’ll head off first.”

Pang Qian stared after his receding figure. Gu Mingxi was silent for a bit and then asked, “How are you going to get home later? When the game is over, it’ll be nearly 10 o’clock.”

Pang Qian turned back to him and said, “I’m going to bike. Xie Yi’s house isn’t that far away from mine. A few of the boys are going the same way, so they said they’d see the girls home first.”

Gu Mingxi lowered his eyes and said softly, “It’s not safe for a girl to stay over at a boy’s house that late.”

Pang Qian looked at him strangely. “I used to stay really late at your house all the time.”

He couldn’t refute that.

Pang Qian said, “Alright, I have to go. Why did you come looking for me?”

“It’s nothing.” Gu Mingxi glanced at her. Originally, he wanted to share some news with her, but he’d already decided not to say anything.



That evening was the first time Pang Qian went to Xie Yi's house. It was a big villa house that stood on its own. You could even call it majestic. Xie Yi's parents were very welcoming, and they even prepared a sumptuous buffet dinner for twenty-something kids. Pang Qian saw the two dogs that Xie Yi raised, both of them covered in golden fur. When Xie Yi was on the sofa watching the game, the dogs laid down obediently at his feet.

Watching the game with such a large group of people was naturally very lively. Even though Pang Qian didn't understand any of it, she was still infected with all the fervor of the boys around her. Xie Yi's TV was ginormous. When the commentator mentioned Hao Haidong, Pang Qian looked to Xie Yi and said, "I know him! Hao Haidong, China's best striker!"

Xie Yi smiled as he looked at her. "Hey, Crab, you do know a little something."

Hearing the approval in his voice, Pang Qian felt very pleased with herself.

After the game finished, Pang Qian and Zheng Qiaoqiao rode their bikes home together. There were also two boys that went the same way. When they arrived safely at home, it was already 11 o'clock. Pang Shuisheng still hadn't slept. Seeing her go into her room, he said, "It's really too unreasonable for a daughter to come home this late. Hurry and give Mingxi a call. He said to call him when you get back."

Pang Qian frowned. "Why would I call him? What time is it already? His parents are already asleep."

Pang Shuisheng figured the same, so he just said, "Alright. Then hurry and wash up and go to bed. I'll give him a call tomorrow morning."

The next day, Pang Shuisheng forgot about this already, but the house phone rang.

He picked it up, and it was Gu Mingxi.

"Uncle, did Pang Qian get home safely last night?"

Pang Shuisheng felt a bit apologetic. "She did, she got back at 11. It was late, so we didn't give you a call."

Gu Mingxi's tone changed from tired to relieved. "Oh, that's fine, Uncle. I just



wanted to check in.”

Gu Mingxi put down the phone and walked quietly to the bathroom to wash up.

Li Han was in the kitchen preparing breakfast. And Gu Guoxiang had, once again, not returned home.

When it was time to eat, Gu Mingxi said to Li Han, “Mom, give Dad a call.”

Li Han’s voice was cold. “What’s the point in calling. We’ve already said all there is to say, so what’s the point of bringing unhappiness on ourselves?”

Gu Mingxi, “But...”

“Mingxi, that’s enough.” Li Han looked at him and reached out her hand to pat his head. “I’ve already decided. I don’t want to be so tired anymore either.”

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and let out a light breath.

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When the autumn wind started blowing, it was time for the midterm exams. Pang Qian’s grades dropped quite a bit. She was only 38th in her class.

She and Gu Mingxi sat on the bench in the park. Gu Mingxi had her take out all her exam papers for him to see. He bent to the side so that both his feet were up on the bench, and then looked over Pang Qian’s test papers one by one.

He really understood Pang Qian too well. She was a typical student, only studying when under high pressure and supervision. In their third year of junior high, when she went to Gu Mingxi’s house to study and do homework, her grades were steady and even rose up. When their second year of junior high ended, in order to go to the comic convention over break, she went crazy studying. She even got into the top 10 in their class. After they graduated from junior high, in order for her dad to change their house to a bigger one and continue being Gu Mingxi’s neighbor, she also put in a lot of effort in her studies to get into a good high school.

Although she was always at the bottom of her class in the first year of high school, under Gu Mingxi’s constant supervision, her grades were at least stable. But now, after just a semester of year 2, there was no one to watch over her.



Pang Qian's habits changed back. As Gu Mingxi looked over her test papers, his frown grew deeper and deeper.

Pang Qian didn't agree with Gu Mingxi. She wasn't at the bottom of her class, and she felt pretty satisfied with her ranking. Of course Gu Mingxi didn't think this way. He was completely familiar with Pang Qian, and looking over her tests, he knew what her weakness was – where she didn't understand at all, where she sort of understood something. She didn't memorize her English. Did she just guess... He understood it all.

He said with seriousness, "Starting next month, I'll tutor you again."

Pang Qian looked at him, baffled. "How?"

Gu Mingxi stared at her, "Devil's tutoring."

At the start of December, the pair of young adults that lived across from Pang Qian in Apt. 502 moved out. They were both new recruits to the metals company. They moved in just after the new year, so they'd been living there for nearly a year. Every morning, they would take the shuttle bus with Jin Ai'hua to get to the factory to work. Reportedly, they were performing well at work so the company arranged for them to move into the new apartments next to the factory.

Pang Qian asked her dad who would live in 502. Pang Shiusheng winked at her and said, "You'll find out later."

A week later, their next door neighbors moved in. It was the weekend so Pang Qian slept in. Then she heard the sounds of the neighbors moving in and the discussions between some men.

Wrapped up in a thick coat, she snuck over to check out the neighbors. 502's door was open, and there were some male workers moving furniture inside the house. Suddenly, someone came out from the door. Pang Qian saw him and nearly scared silly.

"Pang Pang, you get up really late." The youth wore a long down jacket, two puffy sleeves hanging at his sides, as he leaned against the doorframe and smiled at Pang Qian.

– My Mister Ostrich –







# Chapter 54

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 54 Turning Back Time

*All men grow beards, okay.*

---

Many years later, Pang Qian would recall this time when she was in year 2. As if time had been turned back, she and he were back at the starting point.

She would recall Gu Mingxi smiling at her that winter morning. They were so warm that they could scorch someone else's eyes. Every single time she remembered it, she would want to cry.

Gu Mingxi and Li Han moved back to Apt. 502. The reason that they gave to others was that it was inconvenient for Gu Mingxi to get to school when they lived at City West. After year 2 started, he had much more schoolwork to complete. When he started year 3, he would have to go to evening study classes, so it was better to live in the center of the city.

Gu Guoxiang still lived in that large house in the New Gold Park. Actually, Pang Qian already heard about the truth from her parents. Gu Guoxiang and Li Han had separated.

They didn't divorce, because the two of them were both somewhat against divorce. Or maybe, subconsciously, those feelings were still there. But the reality was that the two of them couldn't live together anymore. When Gu Guoxiang returned home, Li Han never spoke with him. The moment she spoke, she would lash out at him with cynical words. And sometimes he couldn't endure it silently, and he would throw back some stabbing words at her. And so, their family would start a big argument again.

The two of them would look at each other with disgust. After a few rounds of this, Gu Guoxiang came home less and less often.



But they couldn't continue forward like that. Gu Guoxiang was currently rising through the ranks at work, and he couldn't let others criticize him about a divorce or his style of life. And so, when Li Han suggested taking Gu Mingxi back to the Golden Compound, Gu Guoxiang immediately started getting the arrangements set. Because Li Han wanted to spend her efforts taking care of Gu Mingxi, she couldn't work at the factory from dawn to dusk anymore, so Gu Guoxiang found a way to let her retire early due to illness. He even helped her find a private company near the compound, where she could work an undemanding office job. As a result, the two of them temporarily separated. They didn't have to have a great big argument every time they saw each other, so they both felt like a load had been lifted from their shoulders.

But for Gu Mingxi, seeing his parents break up this way, he still felt extremely sad.

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The sky was overcast and it had intermittently through the night. Pang Qian carried an umbrella and headed out the door to go to school. She stood in front of her door in a daze, and then eventually went over and knocked on the door to 502.

The door opened and a familiar face appeared in front of her. Gu Mingxi was getting ready to head out. Seeing Pang Qian, he raised his eyebrows at her. "Pang Pang, good morning."

He was sitting on a stool, changing his shoes. Pang Qian didn't wait for him to finish putting them on before crouching down to help him put them on. Gu Mingxi was a bit unhappy. "I can put them on by myself."

"You're too slow." Pang Qian looked at his shoes and asked, "Gu Mingxi, will you be cold wearing these shoes?"

"No, I'm used to it." He stood up, and Pang Qian picked up the raincoat and helped him put it on. Seeing them leave, Li Han came out from the kitchen and exhorted, "Be careful on the way to school. Qian Qian, take care of Gu Mingxi on the bus."

Pang Qian quickly agreed, "I will, Auntie."

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian left together. Pang Qian carried an umbrella and Gu



Mingxi, in his raincoat, walked beside her. The rain drip-dropped onto the umbrella, as Pang Qian remembered that snowy day when they were younger. She and Gu Mingxi had been playing around as they took this path to school.

She secretly glanced over at Gu Mingxi. At that time, she was a tiny bit taller than the little boy. Now though, he had already grown up, and he was taller than her by a head.

“What are you looking at?” Gu Mingxi twisted his lips asking.

Pang Qian shook her head. “Nothing. It’s just been a long time since I’ve gone to school with you. It’s a bit strange.”

He smiled. “It’s been a long time since you’ve done homework with me too. When that time comes, you’ll feel even more unused to it.”

A frown immediately appeared on Pang Qian’s face.

When they got to the bus stop, Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi take off his jacket. She folded it up and then stuffed it into a plastic bag. After he moved back, she naturally stopped riding her bike to school. Every day, she would take the bus with him. Pang Qian felt that she was Gu Mingxi’s pair of hands. She helped him take off his coat and swipe his IC card. When they were on the bus, she helped protect him. To her, doing all of these things was both natural and familiar.

The bus was really crowded because of the rain. Inside the bus, people were dripping and it was very wet. It was cold outside and warm inside, so the windows all fogged up.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood near the rear door. He stood against a pole very stably. When he saw the windows, he blew out a breath and a cloud of white appeared. She stood in front of him, just like in the past. She held onto the pole with one hand, and wrapped her other arm around his waist.

Someone pushed past behind Pang Qian, causing her to stand right up next to Gu Mingxi. Her upper body was pressed up to his chest. She lifted her head and saw a pair of shining black eyes.

His eyes were very gentle. The two of them were very close, so Pang Qian could see a small image of herself reflected in his eyes. She was suddenly aware that she wasn’t a little kid anymore. She couldn’t just stick next to Gu Mingxi without



any care like that.

She took a step back, her face slightly flushed. She didn't expect someone else to push from behind again. Suddenly, she lost her balance and fell forward. Her head crashed into Gu Mingxi's chest.

"Be careful," his voice rang in her ears. His tone was cool and bright, his voice gentle. Pang Qian lifted her head to look at him again. She reached her hand to touch her hurting nose and said quietly, "I know."

Maybe she was imagining it, but she always felt that there was a particular smell on Gu Mingxi. It wasn't exactly fragrant, but of course it wasn't stinky. The smell was nearly indiscernible, but when she closed her eyes, she could tell that the person beside her was Gu Mingxi.

In this moment, Pang Qian suddenly thought of the girl that Gu Mingxi liked. She understood him too well. Gu Mingxi had never dated before, and the only gossip about him had been linked with her.

That girl had somehow quietly entered his heart. He must really like her. He would look at her with a pair of gently eyes, and he would speak to her with a pleasant voice. In that drawing classroom, far away from Pang Qian, he would probably call that girl's nickname very affectionately. Even when she was causing trouble, he would speak with her, affectedly and with restraint.

But that girl didn't like him. She liked a different boy. Pang Qian really felt upset for him. She secretly looked up at him. He was very handsome. It was a very different kind of handsome to Xie Yi.

Xie Yi was pretty, with delicate features and skin. He looked like the son of a rich family. And Gu Mingxi looked a bit cooler than Xie Yi. His face was sharp, with deep features. Thin lips, straight nose. Standing so close to him, Pang Qian could even see some stubble on his chin.

She curiously reached out to touch it. Prickly. Gu Mingxi pulled away and Pang Qian laughed. "Hey, you have a beard."

He didn't know what to say. "All men grow beards, okay."

"Ey— Man?" Pang Qian's tone carried a teasing air. "Do you shave yet?"



A bit embarrassed, “For half a year.”

“How do you shave? Is it easy?”

Gu Mingxi spoke very quietly. “It’s okay. Like when I brush my teeth. I use my foot to hold the razor. It’s not a big deal.”

Pang Qian closed her mouth and laughed. Gu Mingxi’s face grew redder and redder. “What are you laughing at.”

Pang Qian said softly, “Nothing. I just thought that for Christmas, I can give you a razor as a gift!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

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Later on, Pang Qian came to realize that a razor was a very personal thing. A woman couldn’t just randomly send men razors. They needed to have a very intimate relationship for it to be okay.

When the bus arrived to their stop, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi got off. They had to walk a bit, so she helped him put his raincoat back on.

He was too tall. In the past, she was able to hold the umbrella up for both of them to walk under. But now, she really couldn’t help hold the umbrella for him.

A bike whizzed past, catching them by surprise. The person on the bike was very eye-catching because he wasn’t wearing a coat. The rain had made his hair wet, but he didn’t care. He just rode quickly through the school gates.

It was Xie Yi.

Seeing him, Pang Qian suddenly thought of the violin and the arts festival. She recalled something that made her very excited. She said to Gu Mingxi, “Hey, Gu Mingxi, did you know that I’m performing in the arts festival program this year too?!”

For the 2001 – 2002 art show, Class 7 was putting on two performances. One was Xie Yi’s violin recital, and the other was eight girls dancing and Indian dance. Pang Qian and Zheng Qiaoqiao were both participating. Pang Qian was extremely excited about it. Since she was small, she’d never performed before.

Xie Yi was rather irritated about his violin performance. He complained to Pang



Qian, “From primary year 2 until high school year 2, I’ve played. Every year, I play. Aren’t you guys tired of listening to it?”

Pang Qian giggled and shook her head. “Not tired at all. You play really well.”

Actually, what she really wanted to say was that everyone just wanted to watch how cool he looked when he performed. In any case, whatever you play, no one really understands it.

The week before the performance, their head teacher, Teacher Zhong, found Xie Yi to discuss something with him. Class 1 had also prepared to put on a violin solo. When the student council had a meeting about it, they felt that this would be a bit repetitive, so they brought the two teachers in to discuss having both students perform together. They could pick a simple song and change it into a duet to let the kids play it together.

Xie Yi asked, “Who plays violin in Class 1?”

Teacher Zhong said, “Xiao Yujing.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 55

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 55 Arts Festival

*Don't grab onto my toes, they're dirty.*

---

“Xie Yi's become infuriated with Xiao Yujing. He says that they just can't work out their duet.”

“Did Xiao Yujing talk to you about Xie Yi? ...No? Never? They're always arguing. Xiao Yujing's really patient then.”

“Xie Yi tells me all day long that he always that that Xiao Yujing was well-learned and had a gentle temperament. He never expected that she was so crazy when she played the violin. Xie Yi said that if she's like that, she should just perform her violin solo.”

“But there's nothing they can do now. They already promised Teacher Zhong. Xie Yi doesn't feel good backing out, so he can only bite the bullet and learn the song.”

...

Pang Qian was laying on Gu Mingxi's bed, flipping through the pages of Cartoon King. She was eating some beef jerky, her legs swinging in the air. She kept talking about Xie Yi. After she finished her beef jerky, she licked her fingers clean.

Gu Mingxi looked at her and then lowered his head to Pang Qian's homework next to his feet. They were in different classes so their homework was very different. The advanced class moved at a much quicker pace than the other classes. The teacher already told them that by the time Year 2 ends, they should have finished learning the Year 3 material. Then they would spend Year 3 reviewing all the material for exams. But the other classes couldn't use this



method.

Fortunately, Gu Mingxi had already done the type of homework Pang Qian had, several days before. But he discovered a serious problem. Pang Qian's math and science didn't seem to follow the general pace. There was a lot of stuff she seemed to know, but also didn't really know at the same time. Without spending a lot of time working on practice problems to support her knowledge, over the long run, her scores would only drop even more.

Gu Mingxi thought that he had to help her think of a plan. If they start supplementary lessons now, there was still time.

He said to Pang Qian on the bed, "Stop laying there. Come here. I'll explain some of the physics questions you got wrong."

Pang Qian rolled around and stretched, before pouting and saying, "Let me rest a little more. All the dance practice at school made me exhausted."

Gu Mingxi put up with her. "Alright, then rest another 5 minutes."

"5 minutes is too little. 10 minutes."

She laid lazily on the bed for another while before finally getting up and walking over to Gu Mingxi's desk to look at things curiously. The furniture in Gu Mingxi's room hadn't changed. It was just like before he moved away. He only took his desk and chair. They were custom-made for him, so others wouldn't be able to use it.

Pang Qian saw a picture frame on the bookshelf. It was made of crystal, 8 inches wide. And inside was the group photo that Class 2 took on their summer trip.

Pang Qian also had a copy of the photo, but she never put it up. She picked up the picture frame and looked at it. "Where did you get this picture frame? It's really pretty. It shines, and it's pretty heavy."

Gu Mingxi said, "Do you want it? I can give it to you."

"..." Pang Qian didn't know what to say. "Why are you just like Xiao Yujing? I can't just compliment your things? I was just saying it casually, but then you guys both say you'll give me the things. You make it seem like I'm asking for your



things.”

Gu Mingxi stood up and walked over to her. He said, “That’s not what I meant. My dad brought this picture frame back from France. Originally, it was in their room, with their photo in it. When we were packing our things, I saw my mom pull the photo out, so I asked if I could take the frame.”

Hearing him say that it belonged to Gu Guoxiang and Li Han, Pang Qian’s heart grew heavy. After all, she’d seen the time when the two of them were much more in love. When she was younger, Gu Guoxiang also carried her in his arms, holding hands with Gu Mingxi, as they walked around outside the compound to buy snacks. They’d buy delicious food and go back to the compound. He’d pat Gu Mingxi’s head and say, “Mingxi, take Pang Qian to play. I’m going to take a smoke.”

Gu Mingxi was a very obedient child. He would hold hands with the fat little Pang Qian, and the two of them would run along happily.

Now, even though the setting was the same, the people had changed.

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“Pang Pang.” Gu Mingxi called Pang Qian out of her reverie. “It’s been 10 minutes. I’m going to go over the questions now.”

Pang Qian’s expression immediately soured.

It had been a year since she’d worked on homework with Gu Mingxi. Pang Qian really wasn’t used to it anymore. He was very, very, very strict. He was even more strict than the teachers at school. Pang Qian admitted that there were some topics that she didn’t really understand. She would just guess randomly sometimes or use a formula in whatever way she could. Although it was wrong, the teacher wouldn’t think her understanding was very poor. But none of that mattered with Gu Mingxi. He made Pang Qian explain her reasoning, and after she was unable to keep stumbling through her explanation, Gu Mingxi figured out what she didn’t understand. He pulled over the textbook with his foot and started explaining the basics to her.

He never let her brush things off or pretend to understand something. Gu Mingxi said, “I’m not a teacher, you don’t have to be embarrassed in front of me. If you don’t understand something, just say so. I’ll explain it to you. If you



still don't understand it, I'll keep trying to explain. I'll find a way to make you understand it. It's okay if we have to go a bit slower. As long as your foundation is solid, you'll understand what you learn later more easily."

Pang Qian looked at him as if he was some kind of strange creature. "Gu Mingxi, you really should become a teacher in the future. You act just like one."

Gu Mingxi glanced at her, "How could I write on the board?"

"Oh..." Pang Qian scratched her head. "You can be a tutor! Private one-on-one tutoring. My mom wanted to get me a tutor before. One class for two hours, and it cost 50 dollars..."

"Don't change the topic." Gu Mingxi picked up a pen with his right foot and poked Pang Qian's leg. "Come here. I'll explain it to you."

Pang Qian saw how serious he was, so she put away her joking attitude. Actually, she didn't dislike studying. She just wasn't raised with very good studying habits. When it came to studying, it really just depended on how things went. If she was happy to, she would study like crazy. Otherwise, she wouldn't. She didn't like to ask the teacher questions, so after she left Gu Mingxi, she realized that her scores had really fallen.

Gu Mingxi was a teacher who never lost patience. He very seriously and attentively helped explain the problems to Pang Qian. He was also a student, but when he was teaching Pang Qian, he became a very qualified tutor.

Pang Qian didn't even consider whether Gu Mingxi had finished his homework or not yet. He had a lot more homework than her. But at the time, the thought really never even crossed Pang Qian's mind, probably because Gu Mingxi always seemed so calm and unhurried.

For two hours, from 7 to 9 o'clock, Pang Qian felt she had been much more productive than all day at school. When Gu Mingxi said, "We'll stop here for today," Pang Qian actually had a feeling of "Ah, we're just going to stop now?" It had been a long time since she'd put such efforts into her studies. It really seemed like she could only put away her pride when she was with Gu Mingxi. When there was anything she wondered about, she didn't hesitate to ask at all. "Aiya, I really don't get it. Explain it again."



Gu Mingxi put down the pen in his foot. He stood up and walked back and forth twice. He bent over once, and then he stretched back. He stretched his legs out and then lifted and shook his right foot. He was wearing a navy blue sweater, and the sleeves gently swung back and forth at his sides.

Pang Qian was packing away her things. Seeing him like that, she asked, "Are you really tired?"

Gu Mingxi looked at her and didn't try to hide it. "Mm. We spend a long time writing things during the day. My waist aches a bit and my foot hurts too. My leg's a bit numb too."

Pang Qian asked, "Have you gotten any cramps lately?"

"..." After some silence, he admitted, "A few times. After writing for a few hours, my leg would cramp up."

This was an unavoidable thing. Since he was younger, his leg and foot had cramped countless times. Pang Qian stood up and pushed Gu Mingxi to his bed. "Sit down. I'll help you rub your legs."

Gu Mingxi felt a bit uneasy. "It's okay. I'm fine now."

"I'll just help you loosen your muscles." She pushed at Gu Mingxi's shoulders, making him sit down onto his bed.

Pang Qian crouched down in front of him and started rubbing (and pressing) his leg with her hands. First the right leg, from the thigh to the calf and then back up. She used quite a bit of force, because it wouldn't be effective otherwise. After she finished with the right leg, she worked on the left leg. When she finished with that, she picked up Gu Mingxi's right foot and helped massage the back of it. She even grabbed his toes and helped move them around.

Gu Mingxi had his head down the whole time, looking at her. He spoke quietly, "Don't grab onto my toes, they're dirty."

"They're not." Pang Qian looked down at his feet. "But, Gu Mingxi, your feet have calluses. They didn't have them before."

His face started to flush, and he didn't respond.

After Pang Qian finished relaxing his leg muscles, she said, "Your toenails are



kind of long. I'll help you cut them."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

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She really went and found a pair of nail clippers and helped him cut his toenails. The two of them sat across from each other. Gu Mingxi's foot rested on Pang Qian's thigh. She lowered her head, right hand holding the clippers, as she carefully helped him cut his nails.

Gu Mingxi kept looking at her face and the set of long eyelashes. Other than Li Han, Pang Qian was the only one who had helped him cut his nails before. To other people, it would probably seem like a very strange thing, but Pang Qian always did it very naturally.

As she was clipping, she said, "I haven't cut your nails in a long time. Your feet have gotten really big."

When she finished clipping his nails, she pulled out some hand cream from her bag. She squeezed a bit out and applied it to Gu Mingxi's feet. As she rubbed it on, she smiled and said, "You didn't get frostbite this year." When she finished, she even bent down to take a sniff. "Oh... Smells nice."

Gu Mingxi's face had already become a ripe tomato. Seeing her finally finish, he quickly put his feet on the ground.

Before she left, Pang Qian said, "I'll help you massage your legs. And your waist too. In any case, there's just the two of us here. You don't have to be embarrassed. If there's anywhere that doesn't feel comfortable, just tell me."

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Mm."

Before the year ended, the New Year's art festival was held in the school auditorium. Gu Mingxi sat together with Xiao Yujing, who was carrying her violin case and a bag of clothes for the performance. She was fourth. She told Gu Mingxi, "Later, come back stage with me, okay? Help me watch my things."

She didn't have any good friends in the class. Jiang Zhiya and a few other students also had to perform, so Xiao Yujing didn't want to ask them to help.

Gu Mingxi's heartbeat quickened. Originally, he'd wanted to stop by back



stage because Pang Qian was going to dance. He nodded, “Okay.”

Gu Mingxi accompanied Xiao Yujing backstage. Xie Yi was already there, a black suit in his hands. When he saw Xiao Yujing, his gaze could be described as very bitter and hateful.

Xiao Yujing only glanced at him before she spoke to Gu Mingxi. “I’m going to change. Watch my violin for me, thanks.”

After she left, Xie Yi walked over to Gu Mingxi’s side. When he saw Xiao Yujing’s violin case on the ground, he said, “God, my suffering will finally end. I won’t have to work together with that crazy girl anymore.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t really understand Xie Yi’s words. He couldn’t help saying, “Xiao Yujing’s a pretty good person. She doesn’t talk that much usually.”

Xie Yi stared at him. “Wait until you see her violin performance. She’s seriously crazy.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Xie Yi was called to change. Gu Mingxi stood in the corner, guarding Xiao Yujing’s violin. Just then, a cheerful voice called out. “Hey, Gu Mingxi!”

Gu Mingxi turned around to look, and saw a shining Indian girl running to him.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 56

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 56 Wild Song

*She came from Africa. She matches better with the things from there.*

---

It was the first time in her life that Pang Qian had put on makeup.

In primary school and junior high, she was a rather inconspicuous little girl. Average looks, average figure. She didn't have extremely pretty clothes, and she didn't really know how to dress herself prettily. Even when she got to high school, she wasn't interested in things like shopping.

But she actually did undergo some changes.

There's a saying that a girl's appearance changes greatly when they grow up. If she stood in front of a stranger, 16 year-old Pang Qian would be probably be called something like sunny and cute.

Maybe because the face reveals the heart, everyone could feel Pang Qian's energy. She and the words "gentle and quiet" couldn't be used together. She loves to laugh, to play, to eat, to sleep. Every day, living out her life without too many complicated thoughts. Happily, simply. When she saw the boy she liked, her face would blush slightly.

This was the Pang Qian that stood in front of Gu Mingxi. On such a cold day, she only wore a golden tulle dance dress. The hems of her top and skirt had rattling sequins on them. Her youthful body was wrapped tightly by the dress. Her décolletage and slender waist were visible. Glittering decoration was slightly discernible around her navel.

Pang Qian's hair was gathered behind her head in a braid. The rough black braid also had an extension attached, extending to her lower back. Behind her head, there was some tulle. Her face was heavily painted with makeup.



Underneath the heavy eye shadow, her eyes were filled with joy, and there was a smile on her face.

“Do I look good?” Pang Qian showed off her dress. She struck a pose from her Indian dance for Gu Mingxi, and her body twisted to form an S-shape. Gu Mingxi stared and nodded, “Looks good.”

Pang Qian was overjoyed. Just like a monkey, she jumped up and down. She wrapped her arms around herself, “I think it looks good too. It’s just too cold.”

Gu Mingxi said, “Where’s your jacket? Wear it for now.”

“Jacket... I locked it up. Aiya, it’s too much trouble.”

“Why don’t you take my down coat...” Before Gu Mingxi finished speaking, he saw Xie Yi walk over, having changed his clothes and gotten his makeup done.

He was wearing a black suit with a white shirt. His hair had been styled with mousse, and he had shiny shoes on his feet. He looked like a jade tree in the wind, talented and handsome.

Xie Yi carried the jacket he’d just changed out of in his arms. Seeing Pang Qian cold and jumping around, he immediately tossed the jacket to her. “Be careful not to get sick wearing so little. Hurry and put it on.”

Pang Qian looked at him shyly as she took his jacket. “Thanks.”

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She put on Xie Yi’s jacket, bringing warmth along with his scent. Pang Qian felt a sweetness inside of her. Gu Mingxi stood silently at the side. He turned his head away and his eye was suddenly caught on something.

Xiao Yujing walked out from the dressing room at the side. Pang Qian and Xie Yi turned to follow Gu Mingxi’s line of sight. Xiao Yujing took off her glasses and was wearing a long, moon-white dress. The skirt went down to her ankles, and it was full and elegant. On her feet were a pair of silver heels. She didn’t wear any jewelry, and her short hair wasn’t done up in any special way. But in Pang Qian’s eyes, Xiao Yujing looked very noble and refined. She wasn’t wearing any makeup, but she blew away all the girls backstage with their heavy makeup on.

Pang Qian immediately felt very tacky. Her makeup was just like a monkey’s



bottom, and the rattling sequins felt like they belonged on a country bumpkin. Although her costume was decided upon by their head teacher, Pang Qian still felt inferior and ashamed.

She couldn't help looking over at Xie Yi and Gu Mingxi. The two of them were staring at Xiao Yujing. Actually, it wasn't just them. Everyone backstage was looking at her.

Xiao Yujing walked over to Gu Mingxi, put down her plastic bag, and picked up her violin case. "Gu Mingxi, wait for me backstage a little, okay? My performance is near the start."

Gu Mingxi nodded. Xiao Yujing turned to Xie Yi and asked, "Are you ready?"

Xie Yi's eyebrows jumped. He retorted, "Are you ready yet?"

"I'm ready." Xiao Yujing pulled out a stick of lipstick from the bag on the floor. Without a mirror, she just applied it onto her lips. After she applied it to both her top and bottom lips, she said, "I can go onstage now."

Her lips became red. The sharp contrast against her dazzlingly pale skin caused people to be unable to shift their eyes away. Xie Yi realized he was unable to keep the conversation going. He silently picked up his own violin case and walked with Xiao Yujing over to the side of the stage. Theirs was the second performance for Year 2, right after Jiang Zhiya's duet.

Xie Yi saw Xiao Yujing's exposed shoulders and arms in the cold air, and couldn't help asking, "Are you cold?"

Xiao Yujing turned to look at him. "No, not cold."

Xie Yi didn't say another word.

Soon it was their turn on stage. Pang Qian pulled Gu Mingxi over to the side of the stage to watch. They'd already watched Xie Yi's violin performances for 10 years, so there wasn't any novelty to that. This time, the thing to watch out for was the second violin, Xiao Yujing.

Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi stood next to each other on the stage, their formal attire causing a stir in the crowd. After all, the two of them were both famous around school. Xiao Yujing was the perpetual first place of their year, and Xie Yi was the



school heartthrob. Neither stole the limelight away from the other as they stood beside each other. They both shined brilliantly.

The audience held their breaths waiting for the performance to start. Xie Yi lifted his violin to his shoulder and then raised the bow with his right hand. Slowly, the violin sound rang in the air. Xie Yi had studied violin for many years, and he played as if he'd had a very formal education on it. He practiced very rigorously, so whether it was his playing technique, his form as he held his bow, or the posture he stood with, they were all perfect.

An elegant melody poured out from underneath his bow. As Pang Qian watched from afar, she felt that under this graceful sound, the formally clothed Xie Yi looked just like he was filming a beautiful MV (music video). Pang Qian was enraptured listening to him. Unwittingly, she grabbed hold of the jacket she wore, Xie Yi's jacket. She looked at that faraway handsome boy, and wondered how God could be so generous, giving everything good to him.

Gu Mingxi stood silently beside her the entire time. He could see in her eyes all the perfection and splendor she felt for Xie Yi.

Just as Pang Qian had fallen into the sound of Xie Yi's violing, another violin sound entered. This violin sounded completely different to Xie Yi's. Xie Yi's was gentle, sensible, wonderful, trickling in. And this other sound was wild, burning, powerful, and explosive.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were both stunned by the scene before them. The way the elegantly dressed Xiao Yujing played the violin caused everyone to tremble. Her hair swung around, out of control. When the sound of violin was very heavy, she even walked around on the stage as she played. Her long skirt flew around at her feet. Her manner seemed like she was intoxicated, but her gaze was sincere.

The sound of her violin completely suppressed Xie Yi's. Pang Qian could feel that Xie Yi tried to fight against it, as he grew more excited. Occasionally he would overturn his cool image and start walking a bit on the stage as he played. His originally calm face started to distort, his brows wrinkling. He couldn't help but also toss his head and also pull his bow wildly and crazily.

Pang Qian felt like she stood in the midst of two people's insanity. This wasn't



a duet. The two of them were obviously having a battle! But her excitement rose as she was infected by the two of them. Pang Qian didn't dare to let out a breath. The entire audience was also mesmerized by the two performers on the stage.

When Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi played the last note, the entire auditorium was silent for a moment, before a thundering applause sounded. Even the people backstage were clapping nonstop. Xie Yi grabbed Xiao Yujing's hand, and the two of them bowed to the audience. Then they walked back behind the stage, still hand in hand.

Xie Yi's face was covered in sweat, like he'd just run a thousand meters. The bridge of Xiao Yujing's nose was also coated with beads of sweat. When they got backstage, she immediately let go of Xie Yi's hand and walked over to Gu Mingxi. She placed her violin back in its case, picked up her bags, and said, "I'm going to change. Please wait for me a moment."

Xie Yi walked her walk away with his mouth hanging open slightly. Pang Qian moved over beside him and cried out, "Too amazing! Xie Yi! You and Xiao Yujing both play violin really well! Next year, you two have to play together again!"

He collapsed into a chair, lifting his hand to wave away the idea. "You've got to be kidding. If I play violin with her one more time, my life will be shortened by ten years."

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This short violin duet left a very deep impression in Pang Qian's mind. Even several days later, as she was working on homework in Gu Mingxi's room, she couldn't help but bring it up.

Whether it was Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi's clothes or their suprising and explosive performance, Pang Qian relished in it all.

But Gu Mingxi rarely expressed any opinion about it. Pang Qian asked him, "Don't you think that Xie Yi and Xiao Yujing were really amazing?"

"No," Gu Mingxi said dismissively. "I've heard Xie Yi play violin for so many years already. I already knew he was good."

Pang Qian curled her lips. "But at least, you've never heard Xiao Yujing play."



“I don’t think that her violin playing was anything special.” Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian, and then said leisurely, “I think that when Xiao Yujing plays the drums, she’s much more special than when she plays the violin.”

“Why?” Pang Qian asked.

Gu Mingxi answered, “She came from Africa. She matches better with the things from there”

16 year-old Pang Qian wouldn’t understand such enigmatic words.

After she went home, Gu Mingxi went to take a shower. When he got back to his room, he started to work on his homework. From 9 o’clock, he worked until 1 in the morning. It was like this every day.

He checked over the final question and then went to bed. He turned off the light, laid in his bed, but then didn’t feel like sleeping at all.

Of the whole school, Gu Mingxi was probably the only one to remember that country-feeling performance— Eight girls jumping around to an Indian dance.

Their rehearsal wasn’t great, and their jumps weren’t uniform. But Gu Mingxi’s sights had been on that short girl, from the start to the finish. She was barefoot and was doing her best with the stretches. There was a deliberate smile plastered onto her face the whole time.

When they were turning, her braids swung by past her bottom. Gu Mingxi knew that Pang Qian was very happy. This was something she was trying for the first time in her life. She was someone who liked trying new things. She liked eating new foods and listening to new music. In the past, when he took her on the train and the subway for the first time, she was especially happy.

That inconspicuous little girl had already grown into a beautiful young woman. She gained more and more friends, and she found more and more interests. She wouldn’t be the same as before, spending every moment with him.

Maybe she would become more and more better, until one day, she really turned into a swan.

But when that time came, would she see him?

In the darkness, Gu Mingxi recalled Pang Qian’s vivid face as she danced, her



swaying posture, her delicate hands, and that pair of glowing eyes.

Slowly, gradually... He closed his eyes and entered his dreams.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 57

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 57 Seafood Family

*Even now, you still mind that I don't have arms?*

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Gu Mingxi really spent more than a month working on devil's tutoring (or cramming) with Pang Qian. He helped explain math and science to her and watched as she memorized English. He even took out a test that the advanced class had taken for Pang Qian to practice. Although this month of high-pressure learning caused Pang Qian to continually complain, when it was time for final exams, she was still greeted with unexpected results.

Her progress was very obvious. She came out as 24th in Class 7, and her year ranking also increased a lot.

Pang Qian still felt that she didn't do well enough. Because she was careless, she got a lot of questions wrong. She thought that if she put in more effort next time, she might even make it into the class' top 20. Xie Yi said before that as long as you make the top 20 in your class at each exam, getting into a four-year undergraduate program would be no problem.

As for Gu Mingxi, he was only 12th in the entire year. That took everyone by surprise.

But he didn't seem to mind at all. Only Gu Mingxi knew that he didn't study enough. Chinese, math, English, physics, and chemistry were all fine, but he didn't put enough effort into history, politics, and geography. Those subjects required memorizing. Since he didn't have much time to do it, it was natural that his results weren't good.

When Li Han and Pang Shuisheng returned from the parent-teacher conference, Li Han looked gloomy while Pang Shuisheng was glowing.



Seeing Li Han in low spirits, Pang Shuisheng felt a bit guilty. He knew that his daughter worked on her homework with Gu Mingxi every night, and this must have affected his own studies. He said to Li Han, “Next semester, the kids’ studies will be more busy. I’ll tell that girl not to bother Mingxi.”

Li Han looked at him without a word.

Pang Shuisheng told Pang Qian about this, and she finally realized that she was dragging Gu Mingxi’s studies behind. In the most precious two or three hours of the day, he was actually explaining things to Pang Qian. She rarely saw him working on his own studies. Pang Qian had asked Gu Mingxi if he’d finished his homework, and he just said that he already finished most of it at school. He’d be fine doing a little bit later.

Now it seems that he was lying to her.

Pang Qian told Pang Shuisheng, “I know, Dad. I won’t go to his house anymore.”

Li Han similarly spoke with Gu Mingxi, but with regards to Pang Qian not coming over anymore, he couldn’t agree to it.

Li Han found it difficult to understand. “Qian Qian’s studies aren’t bad right now. Mingxi, you don’t have to be responsible for her grades. If you could guarantee that you’d stay in the year’s top 5, I won’t oppose you tutoring Pang Qian. But right now, look. You always go to sleep in the middle of the night, and your scores have dropped out of the top 10.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t want to explain to Li Han why there was a discrepancy between his science and humanities scores. He just promised, “I’m still going to help Pang Qian. We agreed to get into the same university. As for my own scores, Mom, I promise to you that next semester, I’ll definitely make it into the year’s top 5.”

Li Han asked, “And if you can’t make top 5?”

He said, “If I can’t, then I’ll stop tutoring Pang Qian.”

Li Han stared at Gu Mingxi for a long time. Then she sat down next to him and tried to feel him out. “Son, do you like Qian Qian?”



Having his emotions suddenly revealed, even if he wanted to, Gu Mingxi couldn't deny it. His blushing face already revealed all.

Li Han asked, "Are you two dating?"

"No!" Gu Mingxi immediately denied. Then his voice lowered. "There's nothing between us."

Li Han looked down for a moment. She picked up Gu Mingxi's empty sleeves that were lying on his bed and played with the cuffs. She said, "Son, let me tell you, don't give your entire heart to a single person. Especially when that person doesn't care about you. In my eyes, you're an amazing boy. But I can't deny that in other's eyes, you're crippled. You have to learn to have some reservations. Otherwise, one day, you might get hurt, so much that you'd rather be dead."

Gu Mingxi didn't know how to respond to Li Han's words. Li Han stood up and pat his shoulders. She let out a sigh and then left his room.

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Gu Mingxi sat on his bed by himself, zoning out. He looked down at the two empty sleeves hanging at his sides, and he suddenly remembered something that happened two weeks ago.

That day, Pang Qian came over to his house to work on homework. She mysteriously brought over a newspaper for him to look at. It was E City's newspaper, and there was a section on international news. Pang Qian moved over to Gu Mingxi and pointed at a small article. She said to him, "Look at this."

It was news from America, about the development of artificial limbs that were currently being tested. If development on them was successful, the prosthetics would be able to compensate for missing limbs. The idea was to use the body's own biosignals, including EEG and EMG, in conjunction with brain waves to control the prosthetics.

When Pang Qian explained it to Gu Mingxi, her eyes were shining. Her tone was also very excited. "Gu Mingxi, who knows, maybe you'll be able to use these artificial limbs in a few years!"

Gu Mingxi looked down at the article, which was about the size of a piece of tofu. There was a picture of a middle-aged man who was missing his right arm,



wearing a prosthetic. He held a cup of water as he drank from it, with metals hands just like others' bone ones.

Gu Mingxi looked at it for awhile, then he lifted his head and said to Pang Qian, "Even now, you still mind that I don't have arms?"

Gu Mingxi didn't know that he would say those kinds of words. He knew that Pang Qian was well-intentioned, but seeing her expectant eyes, his heart couldn't help but sink. Sink into a cave of ice.

He could never become Xie Yi. Able to play the violin, able to play ping pong. He didn't even have arm stumps. To him, prosthetic arms felt like they would be more troublesome than helpful.

That day, the two of them ended up rather unhappy. Pang Qian was also a bit angry, feeling that her good will had been mistaken for ill intentions, so she went home early. Gu Mingxi also felt stuffy inside, so he found two practice exams and worked on them until the middle of the night.

Li Han took Gu Mingxi back to her family's home up north in Z City over Chinese New Year's. Gu Guoxiang naturally remained in E City. The entire month, Gu Guoxiang went to visit Pang Shuisheng, bringing over New Year's merchandise. Jin Ai'hua didn't want to let Pang Qian hear the two men's conversation, so she dragged her out to the market.

Pang Qian was very well-behaved and listened to her mother chat. Jin Ai'hua felt that her daughter had grown up, so she felt she had to let her daughter know about the rights and wrongs when it came to feelings and marriage. So she told her about Gu Guoxiang.

He was currently living together with a young woman, but it wasn't the woman he'd caused a ruckus with previously. The current woman had applied to work for the metals company after graduating from university. She worked as a secretary and had accompanied Gu Guoxiang to several business social gatherings. They often drank, and somehow, the two of them got together.

Jin Ai'hua started educating Pang Qian. "Girls have to know how to love themselves. Don't you ever do the kind of work where you have to drink with your boss! Men aren't anything good. That woman really has no pride. She clearly knows that Gu Guoxiang has a wife and son, but she still grabbed onto



him. Hmph! Gu Guoxiang is already 45 years old, and she's not even 28 yet. What does she see in him?!"

Jin Ai'hua really felt terrible for Li Han. The more she spoke, the angrier she got. "That low-life Gu Guoxiang just saw that young girl's body, and he wants another son. Hmph! If he wants a divorce, it's not at all easy. House, car, and money all have to be left for Ah Han. With all the things that Ah Han knows, she'll definitely bring him to ruin!"

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When Li Han and Gu Mingxi returned to E City, it was already a week after the New Year. Gu Mingxi brought Pang Qian brought back some specialty items from his mom's hometown. Most of it was for eating.

Pang Qian still felt apologetic about Gu Mingxi's midterm scores, so she suggested inviting him for a meal. Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then said, "Okay, but I'll pick the place."

He had Pang Qian help him carry another bag of items, and the two of them took a taxi to the machines factories. The car stopped in front of Shark's shop. The small shop had just opened for business after the New Year. There were still firecracker remains on the ground in front of it. Pang Qian carried the large bag and stood in front of the shop doors. She felt a bit unhappy inside.

She didn't feel good about this place, because the people here had let Gu Mingxi learn bad things. She still remembered when she saw Gu Mingxi standing in a cloud of smoke, and his cold eyes which terrified her.

Gu Mingxi already walked inside the shop. After he looked around, he happily called out, "Shark! Happy New Year!"

Shark was smoking a cigarette when he turned around. When he saw Gu Mingxi, he was very happy. "Hey, kid! Haha, Happy New Year!"

He walked over and gave Gu Mingxi a pat on the back. "Did you get taller again? It's been a long time since I've seen you. How are your studies going?"

"Alright," Gu Mingxi answered with a smile. Then he turned around and called to Pang Qian, "Pang Pang, come over. I'll introduce you."

Boss Pang Qian reluctantly entered the shop. Shark looked at her, and easily



found that the girl was on guard. Gu Mingxi said, “Shark, I just came back from my (maternal) grandparents’ house for the New Year’s. I brought back some specialties for you and Auntie. It’s all food. Please accept it.”

Shark saw the box and bags in Pang Qian’s hands, and immediately accepted them from her. “Kid, you’re really too polite. Coming from so far away and bringing me something.”

“Shark, I never thanked you.” Gu Mingxi smiled. “Let me introduce you. This is the person I told you about, Pang Qian, my good friend. Pang Pang, this is Shark. I’ll introduce Clam and Oyster to you later. They all treated me really well.”

Pang Qian blinked a few times at Shark, then said quietly, “Shark.”

Shark squinted and then inhaled on his smoke. He said, “Kid, this girl’s the crab you told me about before?”

Gu Mingxi immediately smiled. He nodded, “That’s right. It’s her.”

Shark laughed out loud, haha. “Aiya, what fate. Everyone is seafood. Little miss, don’t look at me so fiercely. Sharks don’t eat crabs. Crabs have shells, they’re not good to swallow.”

Clam and Oyster had spent an afternoon at the internet cafe. Arms around their shoulders, they walked in to work. When they saw Gu Mingxi, they happily bounced over. Clam saw that Gu Mingxi had brought along a girl. He laughed towards her and asked, “Little Crab, are you Gu Mingxi’s girlfriend?”

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian cried out together, “No!”

Clam touched the back of his head, his face flushed. “Then... I’m Ge Xiaozhuang. I’m 19 this year, 174 cm tall, 120 weight. I’m self-studying for a college degree for mechanical engineering. I’ve already passed a few classes. Little Crab, let’s be friends.”

Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian, “...”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 58

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 58 A Love Letter

*Since you think I'm so good, why don't you like me?*

---

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian stayed at Shark's shop for dinner. The workers hadn't yet arrived in large groups, so the area was pretty deserted. There were very few patrons in Shark's shop, so he called for Clam and Oyster to join Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian for dinner.

Shark heard that Pang Qian really liked to eat meat, so he personally grilled a big platter of lamb skewers, chicken wings, and lamb ribs for her. Pang Qian ate until she was hooked and her hands ended up covered in oil. Pang Qian's wariness towards Shark, Clam, and Oyster gradually wore off. She could tell that these few guys genuinely treated Gu Mingxi well.

Clam treated Pang Qian with great care. He kept fawning over her, asking if she wanted to eat this or drink that. It was the first time in Pang Qian's life that she'd been treated like that by a male stranger. She was a bit embarrassed and blushed, unsure how to deal with the situation.

Gu Mingxi watched all this happen, and then he acted very coolly(?).

Cooly. Original text says *niubi*, which I find kind of hard or strange to translate. It sometimes sort of means cool and awesome, but also kind of arrogant or without care for consequences.

He had Pang Qian feed him.

Pang Qian couldn't believe her ears. Quietly, she said, "Eat by yourself. Still making me feed you even when we're outside..."

Gu Mingxi said completely seriously, "The skewers are too oily. I don't want to get my feet dirty."



Pang Qian felt that he made some sense, so without saying any more, she silently fed Gu Mingxi.

She put the lamb on the skewer into a bowl, and then used chopsticks to feed Gu Mingxi. She even cupped her left hand beneath his chin as she said, “Open.”

Gu Mingxi obediently opened his mouth and ate the meat. Pang Qian used a napkin to wipe away the oil around his mouth. Gu Mingxi smiled at her, his eyes so tender.

Or more literally, “his eyes were so tender that they’d take your life.” It’s not the first time a phrase like this has come up (though I usually don’t translate it literally), but I thought I’d just mention it this time. I think this is a common metaphor in Chinese, and there are a few different ways it gets expressed. There are sayings like “scared me to death,” which translate fine that way. But “so tender that they’d take your life” sounds weird. Basically, it means his gaze was extremely tender and gentle. One more thing lost in translation, I guess.

Oyster’s eyes were going to be blinded by this kind of scene. Student Ge Xiaozhuang (by the way, the word for clam is *geli* which might be where his nickname came from) said indignantly, “Xiao Gu, I understand how you feel. The first time my brother-in-law came home for dinner, I covered his food with pepper. But now, we have a great relationship. I’m sure that one day, you’ll be able to accept me as your brother-in-law!”

Shark put down another platter of barbecued lamb in front of them and knocked Clam on the back of his head. “What are you saying! How old is Little Crab? She still has to go to Shanghai for university!”

Pang Qian didn’t dare to speak to Clam, so she stuck to Gu Mingxi’s side the whole time. Before they left, Clam handed her a piece of paper with his phone number and QQ (instant messenger) number. He asked Pang Qian for her contact information and her face reddened. “I don’t have a phone, and I don’t use QQ.”

Clam piped up, “This weekend, I’ll go to the internet cafe to help you register for a QQ account! Then we can chat every day!”

Gu Mingxi heard this, and when they got home, he had Pang Qian go to his



room. He helped her setup a QQ account and even added each other as friends.

Pang Qian was very interested in QQ. She saw the rat icon for Gu Mingxi's name and asked, "What's this mean?"

"I was born in the year of the rat."

"I mean the English part (his username)."

"Mister Ostrich." Gu Mingxi chuckled. "Did you forget my introduction during the military training when Year 1 started?"

"I didn't forget. I just don't recognize these words." Pang Qian took another look at his username and silently memorized it. Then she started worrying about what she should choose for her own username.

Recalling Shark's words, Pang Qian pat her chest, "Then I'll be Miss Crab!"

Gu Mingxi smiled, "Sure."

He helped her change her username and chose a small cow as her icon.

Pang Qian pulled out the note that Clam gave her and told Gu Mingxi, "Help me add Clam as a friend!"

Gu Mingxi quietly helped her finish this. And then after she left, he immediately opened up her QQ account and blacklisted Clam.

And so, Pang Qian finally had her first QQ account. But in her friends list, there was only the one name, Mister Ostrich.

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After school started back up, Pang Qian was adamant in refusing to do her homework at Gu Mingxi's house. However, Gu Mingxi didn't give her the chance to refuse. Since she didn't go over, he carried his backpack to her house.

From this, even the unrefined Pang Shuisheng could see that Gu Mingxi's feelings towards Pang Qian weren't ordinary. Jin Ai'hua was worried. Although she had to admit that Gu Mingxi was a good kid, she couldn't ignore his physical condition. The two kids were still young now, and Gu Mingxi had a sense of propriety. But when they went off to university and lived away from home, who knew what would happen.



Jin Ai'hua told Pang Shuisheng about this. He had a smoke and said, "I only have three conditions for the person Qian Qian wants to date. One, he has to like her. Two, Qian Qian also likes him. Three, the boy has to have ambition. If he doesn't meet all three of these basic conditions, then I won't agree (to them dating). If he does fulfill these three things, then the rest will be seen."

Jin Ai'hua asked, "Then, what if it's Mingxi? You wouldn't mind that he doesn't have arms?"

"Are you saying that Gu Mingxi will never be able to find a wife?" Pang Shuisheng asked. "If every girls' parents thought the same way you did, then all disabled kids should just leave home to become monks. Wife, look. Even though Mingxi doesn't have arms, he has a promising future."

Jin Ai'hua wasn't satisfied with this. "I want Qian Qian to marry a healthy man. To be spoiled and loved, taken care of. I don't want Qian Qian to spend the rest of her life taking care of someone else."

Pang Shuisheng frowned. "Huh, does Mingxi need someone to take special care of him? Moreover, doesn't Mingxi spoil Pang Qian enough?"

Jin Ai'hua was furious. "What do you mean, Pang Shuisheng?! Have you already taken Gu Mingxi to be your son-in-law?!"

Seeing her grow so angry, Pang Shuisheng immediately started to comfort her. "I was just giving an example. But look at the way our daughter treats Mingxi. The way she is, do you really think her thoughts will turn that way?"

That's right. The entire world knew that Gu Mingxi liked Pang Qian, and it was only Pang Qian who didn't know.

This semester, Pang Qian noticed that Xie Yi changed a bit.

First High had class readjustments. After the final exams last semester, there were a few students in the advanced class that couldn't keep up with the teaching pace of the class. After some discussion, they were moved to the general classes. On the other side, a few students from the general class had performed very well on their exams and were moved up to the advanced class.

Xie Yi seemed to be interested in this, and suddenly started to study rigorously. Even the ping pong practice that he had to go to every day was now only a twice



a week practice. He told Pang Qian that he asked his father to get him a tutor, one of those retired teachers from the top schools. Xie Yi's goal was to get into the advanced class next semester.

Pang Qian didn't understand what Xie Yi's motivation was. Maybe he wanted to get into an especially good university?

One day after school, Pang Qian went to the fourth floor to find Gu Mingxi. She stood outside his classroom door. She saw him sitting with his back against the chair, his feet putting things away into his backpack. When he finished, he stood up, bent over, and used his right shoulder to hook onto the backpack strap.

Pang Qian watched him. In the past, when she sat next to him, she would just reach over to help him out. The two of them completely understood each other. Then she saw Xiao Yujing standing in front of Gu Mingxi. She helped him put on his backpack, and even pulled his sleeves through the straps.

Pang Qian's mouth twitched, and she immediately turned around and leaned back against the wall, unable to keep watching.

Gu Mingxi and Xiao Yujing walked out of the classroom together. When Xiao Yujing saw Pang Qian, she smiled at her. Then, with a "Bye," she headed down the stairs. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked together, neither saying anything to the other. When they walked out of the academic building, a girl suddenly appeared in front of him.

She had a baby face, and it had turned bright red like an apple. She walked up to Gu Mingxi with quick steps. Pang Qian watched her. Then she turned around and noticed a cluster of girls in the corner, watching on quietly.

The girl's hands were held behind her back. She stood in front of Gu Mingxi, and then pulled out a red envelope. With her two hands, she held out the envelope in front of him. "I'm Luo Xin from Year 1 Class 4. (Male) Senior, this is for you."

There was a *boom* in Pang Qian's head. Wah, wah, wah! What was this situation? A confession? The kind that showed up in comics?! The gossip cells inside her started to stir. She waited for Gu Mingxi's reaction, and she seemed even more tense than him.



“I’m sorry...” Gu Mingxi stood still, speaking calmly. “I’m not considering these kinds of things right now.”

Luo Xin lifted her head to look at him, her eyes red. “Senior, please read this letter first, and then give me an answer, okay?”

Gu Mingxi’s gaze turned serious. He said, “I’m sorry, I don’t have arms. I can’t accept your letter.”

Luo Xin obviously hadn’t expected this kind of answer. She stood still, forgetting to pull her hands back. Suddenly, a second pair of hands appeared and took the letter from her hands. Gu Mingxi turned his head, surprised, to look at Pang Qian. He saw her giggling and she said to Luo Xin, “I’ll accept this for him. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure he looks at it.”

Luo Xin gave Pang Qian a complicated look. Then she clenched her teeth and said, “Thank you, (Female) Senior.”

When she finished, she ran off. The girls in the corner followed after her. As they ran, they even turned back to look.

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Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian with a heavy gaze. “What are you doing?”

“Nothing.” Pang Qian waved the letter in front of him. “A girl wrote this for you, so I helped you accept it.”

“Who told you to accept it?” Although Gu Mingxi was unhappy, he still didn’t speak harshly to Pang Qian. He started walking, “Let’s go home.”

Pang Qian watched his back, her curiosity about this letter growing more and more. She ran over to him and asked, “Aren’t you going to look at what that girl wrote for you?”

“No.”

“You’re not at all interested in it?”

“No.”

“...” Pang Qian said, “Why don’t I help you read it?”

As she said that, she’s already started opening the letter.



In that moment, Gu Mingxi grew angry. He shouted out, “Pang Qian!”

Pang Qian had a fright. She’d already torn open the envelope. Seeing the way Gu Mingxi glared at her, she was a bit afraid, and also a bit upset. Suddenly, with letter in hand, she ran to the school field.

Gu Mingxi hadn’t expected her to run. He started to chase after her, but if he kept running, his backpack would fall off his shoulders. He had to stop to adjust them, deciding to carry only one strap, and then continued chasing after Pang Qian.

Pang Qian had run up the cement bleachers, huffing as she climbed higher. She dropped her backpack and pulled the letter out of its envelope. *Shua!* Then she started reading out loud, “Senior Gu Mingxi, I hope this letter finds you well!”

Gu Mingxi had also dropped his backpack. He climbed the steps two at a time and ran over to Pang Qian, who was still reading. “You don’t know who I am, so let me introduce myself. I’m Year 1 Class 4’s Luo Xin, and I’m 16 years old this year...”

Gu Mingxi was right next to Pang Qian but he couldn’t snatch the letter back. She purposely held the letter up high towards the sky as she read. She was dodging Gu Mingxi at her side, so even though he’d caught up to her, he still couldn’t take the letter back.

“Senior, the first time I saw you was last May, when they awarded the district’s outstanding students. I knew you studied at First High, so I didn’t hesitate to test into that school. I wanted to [...] with you... Aiya, don’t hit me!”

Pang Qian jumped around the stands, trying to avoid him. Gu Mingxi felt that this was really dangerous, so he couldn’t keep pushing her. But he was also unable to stop her from reading out the rest of the letter.

“This half year that I’ve spent at the same school as you, I’ve stood in the corners watching you countless times. Now, I’m unable to endure this inner turmoil any longer, and I have to tell you. Senior Gu Mingxi, I... Hey!”

Gu Mingxi forced Pang Qian into the corner, and snatched the letter out of her hands with his mouth.

Pang Qian reflexively reached out to grab it back, but Gu Mingxi turned his



head. He didn't bite tightly enough onto the paper, so it started to drop to the ground. Just then, a gust of wind blew past them, carrying the letter down the stands, before it landed in a puddle.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood on the stands, staring down at that puddle. That pink piece of paper would be soaked through with dark, muddy water. There probably wouldn't be much left after that.

With the empty envelope in her hand, Pang Qian dropped her head. "Gu Mingxi, I'm sorry."

Gu Mingxi's mouth was clenched tightly. He stared at her, his face pale. "Pang Qian, you really went too far."

Pang Qian knew that she'd gone way overboard. She wasn't sure why she'd gone so out of control just then. She wanted to see the letter. And because of the way Gu Mingxi always spoiled (cared for?) her, she acted brazenly, thinking that he wouldn't get angry.

But he was angry. Shamefaced, Pang Qian said, "I'm sorry, I was wrong. I won't do it again."

Gu Mingxi's anger wasn't just a little. He hated that Pang Qian bullied him because he had no arms. Even though he knew she was just playing and had no ill-intentions, the fact that she opened his letter without his consent really made him disappointed.

He turned around and walked off, leaving Pang Qian to watch his receding figure. It was early April, so winter had already passed. He was wearing a thin sports jacket. As he walked down the steep stairs, his jacket sleeves flung about.

Pang Qian chased after him, and pulled onto his clothes from behind. "Gu Mingxi!"

Gu Mingxi stopped in his steps, but he didn't turn back.

The stands were empty but for the two of them. A light breeze blew past their cheeks. Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi's hair flutter in the wind. She apologized once more, her voice very timid. "Gu Mingxi, I know that I was wrong."

When he still didn't turn around, Pang Qian knew that she'd really made him



angry. Her heart started to quiver. She clenched her teeth and immediately spoke the truth. “Gu Mingxi, I knew that you have someone you like. I also have someone I like. But, I don’t know why, when I see other girls liking you, I-I-I just...”

Gu Mingxi turned around to look at her, his eyes dark. He asked. “You what?”

Pang Qian pouted and said with a low voice, “I’m just a bit unhappy.”

Gu Mingxi’s eyes lit up a little. With a bowed head, Pang Qian spoke slowly, “Sometimes I think that it’s good that you won’t introduce that girl you like from your drawing class to me. Maybe if you introduced us, I wouldn’t like her. And maybe she and I would fight and cause trouble for you.”

She lifted her head back up and looked at him. “Gu Mingxi, you’re my bestest best friend. I hate those girls who lightly say they like you because you’re good looking or because you get good grades. I hope that the person you like can genuinely see why you’re so great, and from that understanding, they like you. I know what kind of person you are. I know that if you like a girl, you’ll really, really like her. I can’t help but wonder how the girl you like doesn’t like you back. You’re clearly so great. Look, there’s even a Year 1 girl who wrote you a love letter. That girl (that you like), how can she not like you?!”

Gu Mingxi looked into Pang Qian’s eyes and said, “Pang Pang, you’re a girl too. Since you think I’m so good, why don’t you like me?”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 59

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 59 Two Kinds of Liking

*I do like you, Gu Mingxi.*

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Gu Mingxi asked, “Pang Pang, you’re a girl. Since you think I’m so good, why don’t you like me?”

Hearing this question, Pang Qian’s immediate reaction was: Who says I don’t like you?

She was a girl, a girl whose thoughts weren’t sensitive enough, not delicate enough. But that didn’t mean she was a fool.

She’d suspected the kind of feelings Gu Mingxi had towards her. Countless people had asked her before whether Gu Mingxi liked her. When they were in junior high, everyone used to tease the two of them about being a pair. When they started high school, Zheng Qiaoqiao, who hadn’t known Gu Mingxi at the time, had asked Pang Qian what her relationship with Gu Mingxi was.

What was her relationship with Gu Mingxi?

They were neighbors, siblings, classmates, friends that had known each other since they were kids...

They could, without any pretenses, tell each other about the person they liked, the girl he liked and the boy she liked. They had shared and confided lots of secrets with each other.

Gu Mingxi was almost 18 years old. Standing in front of Pang Qian, a tall boy with a handsome face. His eyes were nice to look at, dark and deep, like they could look straight into your heart.

And Pang Qian was almost 17 years old. She wasn’t a girl who didn’t



understand things anymore, but when faced with this question, she really didn't know how to answer.

What did this mean? Was Gu Mingxi confessing to her? How could that be!

Pang Qian thought for a long while, organizing her thoughts. She spoke the truth. "I do like you, Gu Mingxi. It's just not that kind of liking. You're a really, really, really good person. My most important friend, my dearest older brother. But you know, I've liked Xie Yi for a long time. I've only told you, and I never intended to let him know. When you told me about the girl you liked, I didn't tell anyone else either. Gu Mingxi, you like that girl, but I also think that you like me. It's just that they're two kinds of liking."

Gu Mingxi looked at her for awhile. Pang Qian's gaze was very serious, very tense. Gu Mingxi finally dropped his eyes and let out a laugh. He said, "Right, they're not the same. I was just kidding with you. Who told you to rush to believe that."

Pang Qian let out a relieved laugh. She pat her chest. "You nearly scared me to death. You're not angry, right? What I did earlier was wrong. I won't do that again."

Gu Mingxi shook his head. He smiled, "Not angry. Let's go home."

He turned around and his glowing eyes immediately dimmed. A self-deprecating laugh escaped from his lips. After more than 10 years, in the end, he'd been handed the good person card, the brother card, the friend card.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked down the bleachers together. As they walked out the school gates, someone suddenly called them to a stop.

"Mingxi."

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian turned around. Gu Guoxiang stood beside his car, looking at the two of them.

It had already been several months since Gu Mingxi had seen his father. Since he moved back to the Golden Compound with Li Han, he hadn't seen him again. Seeing him now, Gu Mingxi's emotions were very complex.

Gu Guoxiang walked over in front of Gu Mingxi and looked him up and down.



After feeling how thin his jacket was, he said, "These few days, the temperature in the morning in evening are a bit different. You're not cold wearing this?"

"No," Gu Mingxi answered quietly.

Gu Guoxiang glanced at Pang Qian. Neither of the kids had greeted him, and they eyes they looked at him with weren't exactly friendly. He didn't mind, and said, "Mingxi, do you have time? I want to have a meal with you. We haven't talked in a long time."

Pang Qian watched Gu Mingxi, unsure of how he would respond. Gu Mingxi thought for awhile, then said to Pang Qian, "Pang Pang, you should go home first. Let my mom know that I'm having dinner with my dad. After we eat, I'll go home."

Pang Qian nodded, "Okay."

Without even a glance at Gu Guoxiang, she turned around and walked toward the bus stop.

Gu Guoxiang watched Pang Qian walk away, then looked back to his son. "Are you and Pang Qian dating?"

Really picked up the pot that wasn't boiling (or touching a tender spot). Gu Mingxi's face darkened as he responded stiffly, "No."

Gu Guoxiang took Gu Mingxi's backpack and helped him open the car door. "Get in. We'll go find somewhere to sit."

Pang Qian arrived home on her own. She knocked on the door to 502 and told Li Han what happened. Li Han looked indifferent the whole time, but then she said, "Okay. Thank you, Qian Qian."

After relaying these words, Pang Qian went back to her own house. Her emotions were all over the place because of what had happened in the school field. She thought about Gu Mingxi's question, again and again. In the end, she concluded that Gu Mingxi must have been joking.

How could he like her? No, no, no. He should like her. If he didn't like her, then he wouldn't treat her so well. But it should be the kind of liking between a brother and a sister. They grew up together. He always spoiled her, included her,



accommodated her. No matter how Pang Qian treated him, he never got angry.

That's not the kind of liking between lovers. Pang Qian thought of her feelings for Xie Yi. She pulled out her diary from junior high from the bookshelf. She flipped through the pages and found one of the entries she wrote.

She looked at her handwriting from back then, neat and childish. Then she looked at what she wrote. It was so stupid, she could strangle herself.

—I think that I like Xie Yi.

Sometimes he's really cool, sometimes he's really cute, just like Fushigi Yugi's Tamahome. He's our school's most special and handsome boy. And his grades are really good, even better than Gu Mingxi's. But he's not at all like Gu Mingxi, who sits in his room all day to study. Xie Yi likes playing ping pong, football, and video games. He could also play the violin really well. It's really strange. If he plays all day long, how are his grades still so good?

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Wang Tingting told me that Qiu Lina liked Xie Yi. Zhao Lin also liked Xie Yi. Xia Lan and Zhang Wei also liked Xie Yi. I always see them around Xie Yi, talking with him. Every time I see that, my heart feels bad. I'm deskmates with Gu Mingxi, so I never get to talk to Xie Yi. The boys in our class are so annoying, always pairing me together with Gu Mingxi. I wonder if Xie Yi also thinks that I like Gu Mingxi. Xie Yi, I obviously like you! Ay... I wonder what kind of girl you like. Would you like me?

She closed the notebook. Pang Qian's face had turned all red. She plopped onto her bed and dug her head into her covers.

It had already been a long time since she'd written in a diary. The thoughts of a young teenage girl were written so plainly onto the pages of the diary for her to see. Looking at it now, her skin was covered with goosebumps. But this diary gave Pang Qian another thought. She recalled the love letter that Luo Xin gave to Gu Mingxi after school that day. Undoubtedly, it was a silly thing, but also a courageous thing. At the least, she let Gu Mingxi know that there was a Year 1 girl names Luo Xin who liked him.

Then that liking wouldn't have all been for naught.



Pang Qian walked over to her full-length mirror and took a look at herself. She untied her ponytail and let her hair scatter across her shoulders. The girl in mirror was slim, with a youthful and clean face. Pang Qian held her cheeks and made some cute faces. She suddenly felt that she'd become prettier.

Over the years, there was never a shortage of girls who liked Xie Yi. There were often girls in different grades who would send gifts or letters to Xie Yi, but he'd never had a girlfriend.

He was well-liked by the boys and girls alike. Even when it came to rejecting a girl, he never made things awkward between them. All the girls on the ping pong team who'd been rejected by him still kept playing around with him happily.

An idea started to form in Pang Qian's mind. She was already in Year 2, and there was only one more year before graduation. If her high school crush ended just like that, wouldn't she regret it?

Gu Mingxi got back at 8 o'clock. He didn't go back to his own house, but he knocked on Pang Qian's door. He went to her room and then sat down on her bed.

"Gu Mingxi, what's wrong?" Pang Qian saw that Gu Mingxi didn't seem quite right. She sat down next to him and asked him worriedly.

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and didn't say anything.

Pang Qian asked, "What did your dad say to you?"

"Pang Pang..." He slowly said. "Don't ask me, okay? I just don't want to go home. Let me stay here awhile."

If he said it like that, of course Pang Qian wouldn't keep asking. She just scooted closer to him, leaned in, reached out her arms and embraced him lightly.

His body shook slightly. In her embrace, he slowly settled down. He leaned onto her arms and closed his eyes.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 60

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 60 Her Courage

*I said that your bowl is full of meat to eat, but you don't eat it. Instead, you're staring off at a pot of fatty meat.*

---

Gu Mingxi didn't tell Pang Qian about what his dad spoke to him about. He couldn't say it out loud because it was really too humiliating.

He indulged and hid away in Pang Qian's small room, enjoying her silent concern and embrace. Although he knew it didn't mean anything with regards to her feelings for him, Gu Mingxi still enjoyed that bitterness sweetly.

When Pang Qian loosened her hold, the both of them were both a bit embarrassed. Gu Mingxi straightened back up and said lightly, "I'm going home."

Pang Qian sent him to the door and said, "If there's something making you unhappy, you can tell me."

Gu Mingxi turned back to look at her and nodded.

When he returned home, Li Han was washing clothes. Seeing him enter the room, she didn't ask anything, and just said, "You're home."

Gu Mingxi carried his backpack into his room. "Mom, I'm going to do my homework."

Li Han answered casually. "Okay. Make sure to sleep earlier when you're done. Don't work on it until the middle of the night."

Gu Mingxi returned to his room and dropped his backpack on the floor. He sat down on his desk and pulled out a thick envelope from his bag with his feet.

Inside the envelope was 10 thousand dollars. It was an allowance from Gu



Guoxiang. When they were eating dinner, Gu Guoxiang said, “Mingxi, I’m not by your side anymore. If there’s anything you want to eat or play with, just buy it yourself. You’ve grown up. I don’t know how to take care of you, so you have to know how to take care of yourself.

And then, without allowing Gu Mingxi to refuse it, Gu Guoxiang had already stuffed the envelope into his bag.

The reason he came to find Gu Mingxi was to help him encourage Li Han about something.

It was an incredulous thing.

Gu Guoxiang’s opening remark was, “Mingxi, do you want me to come home?”

Yes, of course yes.

Gu Mingxi knew that there were still lingering feelings between his father and mother. He also knew that his accident had dealt a huge blow to Gu Guoxiang, one that he’d never recovered from even after ten plus years. The rift between Gu Guoxiang and Li Han wasn’t unrelated to his serious disability.

Gu Mingxi’s head was originally lowered, as he concentrated on using his chopsticks to eat. After hearing this question, he lifted his head and asked, “Dad, are you willing to come home?”

Gu Guoxiang lit up a cigarette. He took off the glasses resting on the bridge of his nose and placed them onto the table. He looked across the table at Gu Mingxi. He really was already a grown-up kid. His facial features were lively, and he was nearly as tall as himself. Gu Guoxiang rubbed his eyebrows and said, “Of course I want to go home. I miss you and your mom too. It’s just that now... I’d like if you could help me with something. Go home and try to convince your mom about this, and then I promise that I’ll be able to stay with you guys. From now on, the slate is clean. We won’t bring this up again.”

Gu Mingxi asked curiously, “What is it?”

And then Gu Guoxiang told his plan to Gu Mingxi.

He had decided to have another child, regardless of whether it was a boy or a girl. After the child was born, he would give the mother a sum of money. The



woman promised to never come back for the child. Gu Guoxiang said he would bring the child home and he and Li Han would raise him or her together. The child would be registered as Gu Guoxiang and Li Han's, because they were allowed a second child under the current laws. As long as he had this child, Gu Guoxiang could promise that he would never commit the same wrong he'd committed previously.

He would return home and be devoted to his wife and child. He wouldn't be disloyal again.

As an almost grown man, Gu Mingxi was someone who had always understood things. He knew that he didn't have the right to make a decision on behalf of Li Han. Of course he wanted his parents to get back together, and even to have a healthy child together. But hearing these words from Gu Guoxiang, Gu Mingxi's heart froze.

Gu Guoxiang actually thought that Li Han would be willing to raise a child that he and some other woman had created as long as he returned home. Gu Guoxiang felt that he and Li Han still had feelings for each other. After he had a healthy child that carried his blood, everything could start over, what had passed was in the past. Maybe it really was male chauvinism at work. Gu Mingxi looked at his father's guiltless face, his pleasant and eloquent speaking, as if this solution was reasonable and even perfect.

Gu Mingxi asked, "Dad, why did you come to find me? Why didn't you just go directly to Mom?"

"I mentioned it to her before, but she didn't agree to it." Gu Guoxiang seemed as if he couldn't understand Li Han's stubbornness on the matter. "I told her that I must have another child. No matter who births him, I must have another one. If your mother could accept this child, then the four of us would be able to live well together. I wouldn't mistreat you. When you're looking for a job, or you're getting married and need a house, I can help you. You're my, Gu Guoxiang's, son. I won't let you live poorly. But your mother couldn't accept this proposal. If it's like that, then the only thing left for the two of us is divorce. But divorce, for me, for her, for you, isn't a good solution! Especially for you, Mingxi. I told your mother that even if she didn't think about it for herself, she should at least consider you. If you leave me, how will your future turn out?"



After hearing this speech, Gu Mingxi could only give Gu Guoxiang the following response, “Dad, I’m sorry. I think you should go directly to Mom to talk about this. I respect Mom’s opinion. If she agrees, I won’t say anything about it. If she doesn’t agree, then I definitely won’t try to convince her.”

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Gu Guoxiang didn’t talk about it again. After they finished eating, he drove Gu Mingxi back to the Golden Compound. Gu Guoxiang got off the car and helped Gu Mingxi put his backpack on. He asked, “Are you busy with school recently?”

Gu Mingxi said, “It’s alright.”

“What was your ranking after the last final exam?”

Gu Mingxi lowered his head, “12th.”

“How did you regress so much?!” Gu Guoxiang let out a sigh. Seeing his son’s handsome face, he couldn’t help reaching out to ruffle his hair. “Next year is the college entrance exam. You have to work hard.”

Gu Mingxi nodded. Gu Guoxiang looked over and saw Gu Mingxi’s empty sleeves hanging at his side. As if the sight stung his eyes, he tore his gaze away.

“I’m going. If you or your mom need anything, just call me.” After he said that, he got into his car.

Gu Mingxi stood by the road and watched his father’s car drive into the busy street, quickly disappearing in the traffic.

He suddenly realized that his father may never return home again.

2002 was the World Cup. It took place in Japan and South Korea, and China made it to the finals. For the football fans, not having to rearrange their sleeping schedule (to watch the game) and having the Chinese team compete was like a grand feast that only came once in a lifetime.

The World Cup started on May 31st. The semester wasn’t over yet, so the Year 3 students were busy prepping for the college entrance exam and were unable to watch the game. The Year 1 and 2 students didn’t have to follow suit though.

When Pang Qian was practicing in the gym, her mind was pretty absent. Her sights always flitted over to Xie Yi. He was wearing a white China jersey. Although



the national team players would have smelly feet, their uniforms weren't bad looking. Xie Yi's clothes were white as snow, and he looked so picturesque and unrivaled.

Zheng Qiaoqiao threw a ping pong ball at Pang Qian's head. "Stop looking! Your eyeballs are going to fall out!"

Pang Qian went to pick up the ball. When she returned, she grabbed Zheng Qiaoqiao's arm and quietly said, "Xie Yi's really handsome today."

"Xie Yi's handsome every day." Zheng Qiaoqiao pointed off the court with her paddle. "Hey, (your family's) Gu Mingxi's also handsome."

Pang Qian laughed. "Of course, (my family's) Gu Mingxi is also very handsome."

Gu Mingxi was waiting for Pang Qian to finish practice so that they could go home together. His head was down as he memorized his English. Zheng Qiaoqiao was swept away by how admirable he was. She turned back to see Pang Qian unperceptive face. She clenched her teeth and said, "Really blessed without knowing it."

Pang Qian didn't understand, "What did you say?"

"I said that your bowl is full of meat to eat, but you don't eat it. Instead, you're staring off at a pot of fatty meat."

Pang Qian gave her a strange look. "What are you saying. How come I don't understand it?"

Zheng Qiaoqiao couldn't be bothered with her anymore.

After practice finished, Xie Yi walked off to the side to pack up his things. Pang Qian walked over to Gu Mingxi and helped him put away his English book. Xie Yi was watching the two of them when he suddenly decided to walk over. He said to Pang Qian, "Crab, China's playing Brazil on Saturday. Come over to my place to watch it."

Pang Qian immediately blanked. She stuttered out, "Wh-what time? Wh-who else is going?"

Xie Yi said a few names of the girls and boys in their class. "8 PM."



Pang Qian was flattered and overwhelmed. Just as she was about to nod and reply, Gu Mingxi spoke up. “It’s late at night. It’ll be nearly 11 PM when the game finishes, and it’s not safe for girls to be out so late at night.”

Pang Qian felt that what he said made sense, so her heart felt conflicted. Xie Yi immediately said, “Then you should come along, Gu Mingxi. When the game’s over, I’ll have our driver send you guys home. You and Pang Qian live in the same place, right?”

Gu Mingxi looked at him suspiciously. Xie Yi had already put on his backpack. “Then it’s decided. Crab knows the way. You should come earlier too. We’re having a barbecue in the yard, so we can eat up first before the game.”

When he finished, he winked at Pang Qian and swung his bike (lock) keys around his finger, before heading off.

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Pang Qian looked at Gu Mingxi and asked, “Are you going?”

Gu Mingxi returned, “Do you want to go?”

Pang Qian’s face reddened. “Nonsense. (As in, it’s nonsense because the answer is obviously yes.)”

Gu Mingxi said, “Then I’ll go with you. I’d be worried if you had to go home alone.”

Pang Qian immediately smiled. “I just knew it. Gu Mingxi, you’re the best!”

On Saturday afternoon, looking at a bed piled high with tops and pants, Pang Qian’s excitement grew.

Sometimes she would wonder if she was a bit special, to Xie Yi.

First of all, they went to the same elementary school, junior high, and high school. In junior high, they were in the same class for all three years. In high school, they’d also been in the same class for a year. When you were talking about being classmates with him, Pang Qian was the girl who had been classmates with him the longest.

Next, Xie Yi taught her how to play ping pong, and he even let her enter the team. In junior high, Xie Yi would organize weekend outings like going to the ice



rink, playing games at the rec hall, hiking, etc., and he would invite Pang Qian along. In high school, he even invited her to his house to hang out.

Finally, there were the little secrets between Pang Qian and Xie Yi.

The first time was when she told him that she liked hearing him play the violin. Xie Yi wasn't planning on performing in the arts festival that year, but because of her, he went on stage.

The second was at the Shanghai comic convention. Xie Yi happily brought Pang Qian to meet the cartoon artists, and he even asked them to sign things for her. When the two of them took photos together, he would ambiguously leave his hand on her shoulder.

The third was that because of Gu Mingxi. Xie Yi helped Pang Qian tail Gu Mingxi to Shark's barbecue shop, and even went back to the school to get her. That evening, Gu Mingxi had made her extremely angry. She had a big cry in front of Xie Yi, and he sent her home, comforting her that Gu Mingxi would return to normal.

And then Gu Mingxi really returned. Because of this, Pang Qian felt that her relationship had grown more with Xie Yi. After the two of them became classmates, they started talking together a lot more. When Xie Yi and Xiao Yujing were fighting because of their violin duet, he would go to her to talk about it.

Pang Qian rummaged through her dresser and picked out a pretty dress. It was white with floral print and it had a scallop edge. She changed and stood in front of her mirror. She twirled around in a circle and imagined if Xie Yi would consider her pretty.

After she changed her clothes, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi left together. As they walked to the bus stop, she asked him, "Hey, do I look nice today?"

Gu Mingxi looked at her and nodded, "Yeah, nice."

Pang Qian giggled, and daringly told Gu Mingxi her plan.

She said, "Gu Mingxi, I decided to confess to Xie Yi."

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 61

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 61 Butterfly Effect

*If you think it's weird, you can close your eyes.*

---

Gu Mingxi stopped in his tracks.

Pang Qian walked a few steps forward, then turned back. "What's wrong?"

Gu Mingxi asked, "How are you planning to confess?"

"I'm just going to tell him that I like him." Pang Qian laughed out loud. "In any case, so many girls have already said the same thing. Adding another from me won't make a difference."

She bounced back to Gu Mingxi's side and looked up at his face. "Xie Yi's currently the top student in our class. His grades are really good. I think that next semester, he might join your class. When that happens, we won't be in the same class anymore. And since the Year 3 students don't have to go to ping pong practice anymore, I won't be able to see him there either. Even if he rejects me, it won't be awkward. I just thought that, having liked him for so many years, I should at least have closure on it."

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and thought for a moment. He said, "Although Xie Yi's heard it many times, it's still your first time saying it."

"Huh?" Pang Qian didn't understand. "Saying what?"

"Saying 'I like you.'"

"Oh, yeah, that's right." Pang Qian finally blushed. She quickly raised her hands to cover her cheeks. "Ey, Gu Mingxi, you're the worst. After you said it like that, I'm all nervous!"

Then you should just get rid of this idea, he thought.



They were standing on the side of the street, and occasionally, there were people or vehicles passing by. The sun was shining strongly, and the sweat on Gu Mingxi's forehead was dripping down his face. He suddenly heard Pang Qian say, "Gu Mingxi, why don't you help me practice a little."

He looked at her strangely. "Practice?"

"Yeah. I'll pretend that you're Xie Yi, and practice the things I want to say to him to you first." Pang Qian spoke shyly, "Actually, I already practiced to the mirror at home, but saying it to a real person will definitely be more nerve-racking..."

He suddenly cut her off, "Okay."

"Huh?"

"I said okay, I'll help you practice." Gu Mingxi's lips slowly pulled into a smile. His tone was both serious and playful, and Pang Qian couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't. He said, "In any case, there have been girls who have confessed to me before. I'm definitely more experienced than you."

Hearing him say this, Pang Qian retreated. "Ah! no, you'll definitely laugh at me."

He said gently, "I won't laugh at you. I can help you and tell you what a boy would rather hear."

"Really?" Pang Qian looked at him suspiciously. "Right now? Here?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. "Yeah, right now, here."

Pang Qian covered her face again. "Maybe not. It's really weird."

"You're the one who came up with the idea." Gu Mingxi said quietly, "If you think it's weird, you can close your eyes."

Pang Qian stared at him for a bit, and then really closed her eyes.

She stood in front of Gu Mingxi, in her white floral dress, carrying a canvas shoulder bag, and a pair of white sandals on her feet. Her long hair was tied up in a bun behind her head, a chopstick accessory inserted into it. It was obvious that she had dressed up with great consideration.



Gu Mingxi looked at her slightly blushed cheeks and the glistening sweat beads on her nose under the blazing sun. He heard Pang Qian start quietly, “Xie Yi, I want to tell you something...”

A laugh suddenly escaped from Gu Mingxi. Pang Qian opened her eyes and glared at him. She reached out to pinch his waist. “You said you wouldn’t laugh at me! You laughed!”

Gu Mingxi hid from her and pleaded, “Sorry, sorry. Please change out the name for now, otherwise I’ll laugh.”

“Change the name?” Pang Qian asked. “But I’m going to confess to Xie Yi.”

“Then you can just not say the name.”

“It’ll be really weird that way!”

“Then why don’t you just try it out with my name?” Gu Mingxi tried. “Later on, you can just change the name.”

“...” Pang Qian pouted as she looked at him. Then she closed her eyes, thought for a long time, and then slowly started, “I wanted to tell you something... Gu Mingxi, I like you.”

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–Mm, Pang Qian, I like you too.

And thus, Pang Qian stood in front of Gu Mingxi with her eyes closed, as she slowly started to say the words that she wanted to tell a different boy. Gu Mingxi had accompanied her through much of that sentimental, sweet but sour past.

The street beside them was busy, the honking of cars occasionally flitting into their ears. As the pedestrians passed by, they would glance over at Gu Mingxi. A young man, wearing a short sleeved t-shirt, with a tall stature, broad shoulders, and a pair of long legs, but no arms. He was like a tall, straight tree, standing there in front of a young girl, looking at her closed eyes and eyelashes, listening to her spill a story out of her heart.

“I noticed you back in primary school. Every year, you would have a violin performance on the stage, and you would wear a very cool suit. That’s when I thought that you were special.”



–When did I start liking you? I’m not really sure. All I know is that, even though we go to school together and sit together every day, I’ve never felt tired (of being together). I like being with you, and I want to see you at every moment. When you’re beside me, I feel completely at ease. When you asked me if you had to accommodate me in everything you did, that was the first time that I realized you had already grown tired without me noticing.

“In junior high, when we were in the same class, you don’t know how happy I was. You were the 1st ranked in the year, you were so amazing, and I seemed to be more proud than you. And then when I sat in front of you, you even taught me how to play ping pong. For me, it was just like a dream.”

–The morning after my mother’s miscarriage, when I was walking to school by myself and turned around and saw you, I also felt like I was dreaming. You were standing there, smiling at me. At the time, it had already been a long time since you smiled at me. I even remember what you were wearing then. It was a purple-pink dress. You stood there with a giant backpack on your back. Even though the situation between my parents left me feeling terrible, when I saw your smile, I felt like I wasn’t scared of anything. I knew that my Pang Pang was back by my side. I thought, I had to work harder. In many aspects, I couldn’t beat out other people, but I could use all my efforts to study and to help you study. My dad once said that studying was the most fair way for a kid from a regular family to change their life. He was an example of this. So, I think that if I want to be able to give you something when we’re older, I have to work harder now.

“Do you still remember the comic convention that summer? In order to go to Shanghai to see you, I made a bet with my dad, that I could get into the top 10 of our class after the final exams. And I really did it. I was really happy to see you and hang out with you in Shanghai. Our photo together and the autographs from the comic authors are really precious to me.”

–Whatever your dreams, I’m willing to exhaust all my efforts to help you achieve them. You wanted to go to Shanghai, so I went with you. You were resolved to get into a top high school, so I helped you study. You wanted to play ping pong with Xie Yi, so I let you go and wouldn’t hold you back. When your grades dropped, I moved back to your side and promised to bring them back up. You said you wanted to go to Shanghai, to get into Fudan, which really is a bit



difficult. But I believe that with our joint efforts, getting into a good university in Shanghai is a real possibility.

“Being able to go to the same school and even end up in the same class as you, I felt that you and I had some fate. Xie... Gu Mingxi, maybe next semester, we won’t be in the same class anymore. You’re working hard, and I’m working hard too. I don’t know what kind of university you’ll get into in the future, and maybe we’ll lose contact after that. But right now, I still want to tell you what I’m feeling inside.”

—A tragedy has fallen onto my family. From the day I lost my arms, the “family” behind me started to slowly collapse. Pang Pang, do you know, the thing that I don’t want to think about the most is whether or not you feel responsible for turning me into a cripple. When we were younger, we never talked about these kinds of things. Last year, when I was sick over the New Year’s, you apologized about this to me. Although I said that I forgave you, but the truth is, I really, really never blamed you for it.

At the time, we were both young, and we didn’t understand anything. After that accident, my entire life changed, but I didn’t feel that my future had been ruined. In fact, I never had any grand dreams. I just hoped that I would do my best and be self-reliant with my own craft or undertaking. And then form a family with the person that I loved, have a child, and live a warm and serene life together.

I hoped that person would be you, but I didn’t hope for it excessively, because life comes with many changes. A butterfly flapping its wings in a South American rain-forest can cause a tornado in the state of Texas two weeks later. So, I wanted to tell you that about all this, I won’t insist.

You’ve grown up, so I won’t cling to the idea that you have to stay by my side. Of course, I’ll still be with you now, and I would like to continue doing so. I just think that one day, I’ll realize that you don’t need me there anymore. You’ll have a life completely of your own. And I think that when that happens, I will be willing to leave.

“Xie... Oh, annoying... Gu Mingxi, I really like you.”

—My dearest Pang Pang, the girl I’ve always been beside who’s always been



beside me, I also really like you.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 62

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 62 Line or Circle

*Me, like her? You've got to be kidding.*

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Pang Qian opened her eyes and raised her head to look at the boy in front of her. "I'm done."

Gu Mingxi nodded. "I heard you."

"Can I say it like that?"

"It's a bit long-winded," Gu Mingxi responded. "Actually, all you have to say is that you like him, and that would be enough."

"That's it?"

"Yeah."

Pang Qian scratched her head. "But I've liked him for a long time. I want him to know that I haven't just suddenly caught a fever."

"Don't worry, I wouldn't lie to you," Gu Mingxi said sincerely. "There are some things you don't have to say, and the other person will still feel it."

Pang Qian thought about it for a moment, and then nodded. "That makes sense." After another while, she asked, "Gu Mingxi, do you still like that girl?"

"..." Here it was again. Every time she asked excitedly about "that girl," Gu Mingxi always got a headache. He asked, "Why?"

"You always have art lessons on the weekend. Is that girl still there? Is she studying arts or liberal arts and science? Does she still not know that you like her?"

Gu Mingxi furrowed his brows. "What is it that you want?"



“I want to ask, mm... Look, I’ve already decided to confess to Xie Yi. Regardless of what the outcome, I’m just going to make this (crazy) move this time.” Pang Qian grabbed Gu Mingxi’s shoulders with her hands and walked forward with him. She was on her tiptoes, bouncing along after him. “Gu Mingxi, shouldn’t you also gather up your courage for a moment and confess to that girl? Regardless of her response, at least you’ll have done your best and tried.”

Gu Mingxi smiled, but didn’t respond. He asked, “Pang Pang, if Xie Yi rejects you, will you really not be hurt?”

“...” Pang Qian seriously thought for a moment, then said, “Of course I’ll be hurt. But if I don’t try it, I’m afraid that I’ll always regret it.”

She kicked a pebble on the road. “I don’t expect Xie Yi to like me, but I just want to let him know that I like him. And that’s enough.”

Hearing this, Gu Mingxi was momentarily startled. He said, “Maybe you’re right. No matter the outcome, you should at least fight for it.”

The two of them got onto the bus and finished this topic. The bus stopped at a street nearby Xie Yi’s house. They got off the bus, and Gu Mingxi had Pang Qian go through the money in his pocket, saying he wanted to buy something.

Pang Qian didn’t really understand. Gu Mingxi taught her that when you visit someone’s house, showing up empty-handed wasn’t very polite.

Ever since they were small, he was always teaching her the way to act when interacting with others.

They bought a bag of lychees and a bag of mangoes, and then walked for ten or so minutes along the deserted street before finally reaching Xie Yi’s house.

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It was a really luxurious looking villa. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi carried the bags of fruit up to Xie Yi’s house. He opened the door for them, and the guests were very festive inside. A lot of classmates had already showed up.

What surprised Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi was that Xiao Yujing was also there.

Xie Yi’s house had a small courtyard, and there really was a barbecue set up there with lots of food to eat. Originally, everyone would be busy studying for



the final exams now. It was rare that they would have such a chance to relax. So, taking advantage of this chance to watch the ball game, several boys and girls were enjoying themselves, eating and drinking, playing around.

Most of the people there to watch the game were Year 2 students. There were also a few people from Xie Yi's ping pong team. Xiao Yujing didn't know any of them.

Pang Qian walked inside the house and ran over to greet a few girls. Gu Mingxi didn't really know anyone else, so he naturally sat down next to Xiao Yujing.

"Hi, you came too." Xiao Yujing smiled at Gu Mingxi. She wasn't curious about why Gu Mingxi had shown up, nor did she explain how she came to be there. In most people's eyes though, aside from her violin performance with Xie Yi, the two of them weren't related in any way.

Xie Yi warmly greeted everyone. When he saw Gu Mingxi and Xiao Yujing sitting together and chatting in the living room, he walked over and called out, "You two top students, don't just sit here and zone out. Go to the yard and eat some food."

Xiao Yujing looked out to the courtyard and stood up. "Gu Mingxi, let's go sit outside."

Gu Mingxi didn't oppose, so the two of them walked out to the yard. Pang Qian was there chatting with Zheng Qiaoqiao. When she saw Gu Mingxi appear, she immediately ran over and quietly asked, "Do you want to drink something? I'll help you get it."

Before Gu Mingxi could respond, Xie Yi had already brought over a crate of drinks. Inside the cooler box were an assortment of imported juices and coffee. He pulled out a bottle of orange juice and handed it to Pang Qian. "Crab, whatever you want to drink or eat, feel free to serve yourself. Gu Mingxi, don't be too polite (basically, help yourself)."

Gu Mingxi smiled slightly, "Okay."

Xie Yi glanced over to Xiao Yujing, "What about you? What do you want to drink?"

"Cola." Xiao Yujing's voice was very calm. Pang Qian drank her orange juice



and looked over at her. Xiao Yujing was wearing a white t-shirt, denim shorts, and her hair was short. She had on a pair of large glasses. She was small and thin, with delicate and smart features.

For some reason, Pang Qian always felt that the way Xie Yi treated Xiao Yujing wasn't that good. His voice was a bit cutting as he said, "Sorry, there's no cola."

Xiao Yujing shrugged, "Then just boiled water."

Xie Yi, "..."

The boys were politely grilling things for the girls. Xie Yi's handiwork was pretty good. He grilled a plate of chicken wings, sausages, shrimp for Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi. Maybe it was her imagination, but Pang Qian kept feeling that Xie Yi took particularly good care of her that entire day. She was flattered, her heart pounding.

You can't blame Pang Qian for thinking so much. It would be one thing if he treated all the girls as well. But the point was that Pang Qian was with Gu Mingxi the whole time, who was with Xiao Yujing the whole time. After awhile, Xie Yi wasn't so lukewarm towards Xiao Yujing anymore. Sometimes when he spoke to her, his tone was a bit thorny.

Xiao Yujing wasn't at all angry. She just enjoyed herself. She stood at the grill, making food to eat. She got some toast from the buffet table, made an egg, added some dressing, and made herself a big sandwich.

She ate her sandwich as she played with Xie Yi's two golden retrievers.

"Hey, Bruno! Catch!" Xiao Yujing tossed out a ball, and Bruno and Lucky (originally *dafu* or "great luck") both chased after it. In the end, Dafu brought it back in its mouth, his tail wagging happily, as he returned to Xiao Yujing's side.

"Lucky, good boy." Xiao Yujing sat cross-legged on the ground, taking big bites of her sandwich. Bruno and Lucky walked in circles around her. She rubbed their furry heads and said, "Be good. This is for me to eat, not for you guys."

Seeing the two dogs looking so greedy, Pang Qian picked up a sausage skewer and ran over to Xiao Yujing, excited to feed the two golden dogs. Xiao Yujing immediately stopped her, "Crab! Don't feed them! Dogs eat dog food, don't feed them other things!"



Pang Qian was a bit embarrassed and couldn't help but say, "My uncle has dogs and they eat dog food, and they still feed them bones with meat. Little dogs like to eat meat."

Xiao Yujing said, "This sausage is really salty. Bruno and Lucky's dog food already has enough salt in it. If you feed them the sausage, it might become a burden on their kidneys. And when it comes to these golden retrievers, it's better for them not to become used to eating snacks like this, especially if it's human food. A lot of it isn't suitable for them to eat."

Pang Qian was stupefied. Just then, Xie Yi piped up, "Our family's dogs aren't so dainty. Eating a bit of sausage won't cause any problems."

Hearing Xie Yi helping, Pang Qian was so touched. Xiao Yujing just got up and pat the dirt from her bottom. She looked at Xie Yi, and then said lightly, "Whatever. They're not my dogs anyway. Just say that I was being a busy body."

When she finished, she turned around and went back to the living room to watch TV.

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Xie Yi stood in the yard, watching her back. He furrowed his dark eyebrows deeply. Then he lowered his head and called for Lucky and Bruno to return to his side.

Gu Mingxi had witnessed all that had just happened. Pang Qian sat down next to him, stuffy and unhappy. She said quietly, "Don't all dogs like to eat meat? When I feed sausages to Grandpa Zeng's dog Wang Wang, it's really happy."

Gu Mingxi responded in a low voice, "Those are mutts. Xie Yi's dogs are pure bred, so they really shouldn't eat randomly."

"Then what do I with this sausage? Throw it away?" Pang Qian held a sausage skewer in her hand, the oil dripping down her hands. Gu Mingxi said, "Just eat it yourself."

"I'm too full."

"Then... Then feed it to me."

After he said that, he really opened his mouth. Pang Qian's depressed mood



immediately lightened. She stuffed the sausage into his mouth and laughed, “Does it taste good?”

With face stuffed full, Gu Mingxi chewed and threw a chagrined glance at her.

That evening was the China vs. Brazil game. The Chinese team was obviously going to be demolished by the Brazilian team. Some ten plus young adults sat in Xie Yi’s living room, eating popcorn, drinking cold drinks, having a fun time.

During the half-time break, Xiao Yujing said to Xie Yi, “I’m heading home now. There won’t be any buses later.”

Xie Yi immediately jumped up, “I’ll send you.”

“No need. It’s still early now. I can go to the bus stop by myself.” Xiao Yujing’s gaze and tone couldn’t be countered, so Xie Yi just watched her pack up her things and say goodbye before leaving.

After she left, the students of Class 7 immediately exploded. A few boys started to interrogate Xie Yi about why Xiao Yujing would come over to his house to watch the game.

“My god, I nearly suffocated to death. I didn’t dare shout out anything. Like, if I cried out a single ‘damn it,’ I’d be bringing shame to myself.” The fat kid pat his chest. “Goddess Xiao, ranked first in the year. I’ve never been in such close proximity to her before.”

Someone said, “Sports King Xie, when did you and Goddess Xiao become friends?”

Someone else asked, “Xie Yi, have you started liking the Xiao girl?”

When she heard this, Pang Qian’s ears stood up. Xie Yi just laughed awkwardly and said, “Me, like her? You’ve got to be kidding.”

When he said that, he gave Gu Mingxi a meaningful glance. A bit of hostility flashed across his eyes, but his smiling face quickly returned.

Other than Gu Mingxi, no one else saw that look. After Xie Yi’s gaze left Gu Mingxi, he looked over to Pang Qian.

Silly Pang Qian, joyous Pang Qian, shy Pang Qian, naive Pang Qian.



Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian, Xie Yi, Xiao Yujing.

Was this a line or a circle?

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 63

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 63 Children's Park

*Gu Mingxi, let's skip class.*

---

All the way up until the ball game started, Pang Qian didn't have a chance to talk to Xie Yi privately.

She remembered the way that Xie Yi looked at her after Xiao Yujing left. His eyes were hiding something, and they didn't seem the same as usual. But it was brief, and he quickly reverted his gaze and laughed around with the other kids.

On the way home with Gu Mingxi, she chattered about the evening's events. She even brought up how Xie Yi seemed different from usual. Gu Mingxi listened on quietly and didn't reveal any reactions.

"Gu Mingxi, do you think that Xie Yi likes me, even a little?" Pang Qian covered her cheeks with her hands, her eyes shining. "He didn't barbecue anything for the other girls today, but he made me a lot of things. And he joked around with me like he always does."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian shook her head in embarrassment. "Was I being too obvious? Xie Yi's so smart, so he can't not know that I like him. Then if he knows, and he treats me even better than before, what does it mean?"

Gu Mingxi, "..."

"And he was so mean to Xiao Yujing. It was really strange." Pang Qian's heart was pulled into confusion by Xie Yi. The more she thought about it, the less she understood. Since Gu Mingxi wasn't answering, she gave him a shove. "Hey, why aren't you saying anything?"



Gu Mingxi looked at her and asked, “Are you still going to confess to Xie Yi?”

“Of course,” Pang Qian responded loftily. “Final exams are almost here. I have to make good use of time and say it now. Otherwise I won’t be able to sleep at night anymore.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“Don’t laugh at me, Gu Mingxi.” Pang Qian lowered her head again, her voice becoming thin. “I keep thinking that I might not get rejected.”

Seeing her acting shyly, Gu Mingxi still didn’t say anything, but inside of him, some anxiety started to float up.

Pang Qian was the kind of person who was quick to act. Two days later, on Monday, she decided to stop dragging things along.

Having grown up on shoujo mangas, Pang Qian was a born dreamer. She was passionate about all things regarding a prince and Cinderella. In the comics, no matter how amazing the female supporting character was, the perfect prince always fell for Cinderella.

Pang Qian, a young girl, had no immunity to these kinds of stories. She was realistic, but occasionally she would dream. And Xie Yi was a beautiful dream. The 17 year-old Pang Qian decided that before Year 2 was over, she would draw a conclusion to her many years crush.

She didn’t tell Gu Mingxi about her plan. On the way back to class after having lunch in the cafeteria, her eyes always flitted over to Xie Yi.

Pang Qian knew Xie Yi’s schedule. He didn’t stay up very late so he was never too tired in the afternoon, like the other students who laid down on their desks. Every day at noon, Xie Yi would go to the gym to practice for an hour. His practice buddies would meet up with him in the gym, so when he grabbed his paddle and walked over, he was always by himself.

The entrance to the gym was very obscure. There were few people around at noon, so it was a great place for a confession.

Pang Qian’s eyes kept following Xie Yi, and she noticed that he was a rather unusual that day. When it was the time that he would normally go to practice,



he grabbed a bottle and gulped down most of the contents. Then he got up and walked out of the classroom.

Pang Qian immediately followed him.

She tossed her hair a bit, tidied her clothes, and then repeated the words she wanted to say inside her head. Anxious and expectant, she followed Xie Yi. She'd decided to stop him when he was downstairs, in front of the gym.

But the strange thing was that Xie Yi didn't go to get his paddle. In fact, he didn't even go downstairs. Instead, he went up.

There were other students moving around the corridor, so Xie Yi didn't notice Pang Qian tailing him. She kept following him, with some suspicions, all the way to the fourth floor.

The classroom at the west-most end of the floor was Year 2 Class 1's classroom. Pang Qian stood at the stairs without moving, watching as Xie Yi walked over to Class 1's classroom door.

He waited a bit and then grabbed hold of a student who walked out. He pointed to someone inside, like he was asking that student to help him call someone out. Pang Qian moved towards the corner a bit, hiding herself. An idea suddenly popped into her head. Her heart, which had been tossed into chaos because of Xie Yi, suddenly cleared up. She heard her own heart beating, *badump badump badump*. But other than that, she couldn't hear anything.

Xiao Yujing walked out of the classroom and stood in front of Xie Yi.

That morning was the flag raising ceremony, and all the students were in their summer uniforms. The top was a white short-sleeved shirt, with blue stripes on the collar and cuffs. The bottom was a pair of blue shorts.

When good looking people wore it, it looked good. Xie Yi wearing a 50 dollar school uniform felt like he was wearing Nike or Adidas. And the uniform that hung loosely on Xiao Yujing's slender body showed her petiteness, gentleness, and delicateness.

Pang Qian couldn't hear what they were saying. She only say that Xiao Yujing was walking back to the classroom when Xie Yi grabbed onto her hand. He pulled her to the small west-facing balcony. Pang Qian stretched her neck around the



doorway and say Xie Yi standing in front of Xiao Yujing. He was saying something.

He seemed very excited, using hand gestures and all. But Xiao Yujing stood completely still. Finally, Xie Yi stopped and Xiao Yujing turned to leave. This time, after Xie Yi grabbed her hand, he pulled her into his arms, hugging her tightly. He lowered his head and kissed her lips.

This was the first time in Pang Qian's life that she'd two people kissing. Although she was a bit far away, and it was like a silent movie, she was completely shocked.

From the corner she stood in, she saw Xiao Yujing's back. The entire time, her arms hung at her sides, not reciprocating Xie Yi's embrace. But she could see Xie Yi's face. His head was lowered, his tall body holding the small Xiao Yujing. He looked like he was in pain even as he was absorbed in the kiss.

Pang Qian suddenly felt foolish, like a buffoon, for peeping. She looked around her nervously. It was lunch time and the corridor was mostly empty. None of the students walking out of the restroom took note of the happenings on the small balcony.

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For some reason, Pang Qian thought back to two days previously when she was talking to Gu Mingxi. She was so pleased as she told him about how great Xie Yi was, that she felt he might actually like her a bit. She even said that Xie Yi treated Xiao Yujing so meanly, that he'd taken her side when she had a dispute with Xiao Yujing. And when Xiao Yujing got a bit angry, Pang Qian actually felt a bit satisfied.

Thinking about it again today, she'd been a downright idiot. To her, she was a fool, but in other people's story, she must have just been an utterly laughable character.

Xie Yi finally released Xiao Yujing. Pang Qian stuck with her back firmly to the wall, her sweat dripping like rain. She saw Xiao Yujing take two steps back. She didn't get angry or hit Xie Yi. Instead, she just lifted her hand and rubbed her lips.

Xie Yi's complexion immediately changed.



Xiao Yujing went back to her classroom without even a glance back, and Xie Yi remained standing on that small balcony for a long time.

He was about to head back downstairs. When he walked past Pang Qian, for some reason, she didn't try to hide. She just stood there, still. When Xie Yi passed her, he'd definitely see her. She didn't pull back her gaze either, very clearly looking at Xie Yi. As he left the balcony, her eyes followed him.

But what made Pang Qian really despair was that as Xie Yi walked slowly past her, his eyes staring straight ahead, he actually didn't notice she was there.

Pang Qian's heart suddenly went cold and crushed to pieces. She felt the strength leave her body as she slowly slipped down the wall behind her. In the end, she sat, crouched on the ground.

She hid in the corner, arms wrapped around her knees, as she shivered. Her clothes were soaked with sweat, and at some point, tears also started to diffuse from her eyes.

After some time, a familiar, gentle voice floated to her.

"Pang Pang."

With misty eyes, Pang Qian lifted her head and saw Gu Mingxi's concerned face. He crouched down beside her, eyes full of worry as he asked anxiously, "What's wrong? Does your stomach hurt? Why are you on the fourth floor? Were you looking for me?"

Pang Qian just stared at Gu Mingxi. His furrowed brows, the wrinkle between his eyes, the bobbing of his Adam's apple as he spoke, the emptiness at the ends of his shoulders... She was lost in his gentle voice. "Pang Pang, don't cry. Tell me what happened."

Pang Qian wiped away the tears from her eyes and suddenly said, "Gu Mingxi, let's skip class."

"..." He hadn't expected her to say such a ridiculous thing and was stunned momentarily. He looked at her wet eyes, looking like a pitiful little puppy. She looked sheepishly at him, and after a long time, Gu Mingxi nodded.

"Okay."



They left school and walked to the nearby bus stop. They randomly got onto a bus that came.

Neither of them had brought along their backpacks, just abruptly disappearing from class. Gu Mingxi had 100 dollars (15 USD) in his pants, and Pang Qian had a few dollars with her. Like that, the two of them started on their small adventure.

After seven or eight stops Pang Qian looked out the window and suddenly said, "Gu Mingxi, let's get off!"

He followed her off the bus, and then realized that they were at E City's Children's Park.

Pang Qian was much more familiar with this place than Gu Mingxi. After his accident, he'd never come to this place again. After more than ten years, the once lively park had now become a bleak place. The kids now all went to the large playground in the next city to play. They didn't come to this small park anymore.

The park didn't have admission tickets. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi just walked inside. She didn't say anything to him, and he didn't ask, as they just walked along side by side.

There were very few visitors to the park on Monday. A lot of the park's facilities had been shut down. Pang Qian kept walking under the midday sun, when she suddenly pointed at something and said, "I want to ride that one."

It was the biggest attraction at this park (pictures make it seem like it's a roller coaster with water underneath?). Gu Mingxi said, "Okay. The money's in my pocket, take it out. Go buy a ticket and ride it. I'll wait for you at the bottom."

Pang Qian shook her head. "No, I want you to ride it with me."

Gu Mingxi looked at her, and after awhile, he nodded. "Okay."

He didn't have arms, so the uncle working at the ride wouldn't let him on. Pang Qian's lips deflated, her eyes looking teary, so the uncle compromised. "There aren't many people here today, so I'll let you two play. Don't let anyone know."

Pang Qian immediately nodded, and then she and Gu Mingxi sat into the small cart.



The uncle secured the safety belt onto Gu Mingxi, and then had Pang Qian wrap her arms around him. He said this would be more safe. The cart started moving upwards slowly. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both straightened their bodies, and Pang Qian held on to Gu Mingxi obediently. She held the handrail with one hand and his waist with the other. She even buried her cheek into Gu Mingxi's shoulder.

They were the only two on the ride. After the cart climbed up, it started gaining speed and started dropping. The powerful inertia caused Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi to stagger, and Pang Qian screamed out loud. She was already stuck right next to Gu Mingxi's body, as she kept screaming. The cart rushed down the ramp and cool water splashed at them. When the cart finally slowed, Pang Qian let go of the handrail and wrapped both arms around Gu Mingxi.

She gasped for breath and then looked over at him. "Was it fun?"

Gu Mingxi seemed very calm as he nodded, "Yeah, it was fun."

Pang Qian smiled and said, "Then let's go ride some other things!"

They went to play at the bumper cars, and they were the only two people there. Pang Qian drove a red car, and Gu Mingxi drove a blue one. The carts were pretty small. He had one foot on the ground and could only use one to steer. The two of them drove around and bumped into each other as they played.

Pang Qian smiled widely. She always chased after and hit Gu Mingxi. In the end, she couldn't help laughing out loud. He called to Pang Qian, "Pang Pang, don't run! Don't think that I don't hit you back!"

Then they rode the teacups, the waves, the mini pirate ship, the flying swings... (Names of amusement park rides, I don't know.)

When they were tired from playing, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat down on a swing, side by side. She bought a bottle of cold Fanta and swung her legs as gulped it down. She stuck her tongue out at Gu Mingxi, "Did my tongue turn orange?"

Gu Mingxi laughed, "Yeah."

Pang Qian hopped off the bench and walked in front of Gu Mingxi, holding the



bottle up to his lips. "You must be thirsty. Your lips are all cracked."

Gu Mingxi shook his head. "I'm not drinking."

"You don't want it because I drank from it?"

"That's not it." Gu Mingxi laughed helplessly, then opened his mouth. "Okay, I'll drink a little."

She giggled as she fed him some Fanta. "Let me see your tongue!"

Gu Mingxi quickly stuck out his tongue. Pang Qian happily said, "Yours is orange too!"

They sat underneath the shining sun, not at all caring or trying to find any shade. Pang Qian stood behind Gu Mingxi and pushed his back so that he swung a little.

They were both soaked with sweat, their faces red from the sun.

Gu Mingxi looked up towards the sky. He was unable to hold onto the swing's chains, so he couldn't go very high. He could only little by little, move closer to the sky and the birds flying up there.

Pang Qian said, "Say, do you think they'll be looking for us?"

Gu Mingxi answered, "For sure."

"Will they contact our parents?"

"I don't know about that."

"Will we get scolded when we go home?"

He smiled and nodded, "Definitely."

"Are you scared?"

"No." He turned slightly to look at her. "Pang Pang, remember, when they ask you about it, you have to say that I made you come out to play. Just say that I felt like school was too much pressure, so I suddenly wanted to go for a walk. You were worried so you followed me, and there was no time to let the teachers or parents know. Remember, you have to say it like that."

Pang Qian stared at him, as she slowly stopped moving. His swing slowly came



to a stop. Pang Qian reached out her arms and hugged him from behind. His shoulders were broad and warm. She nestled her face into him. It was sweaty, but she didn't mind. She said quietly, "Gu Mingxi, you're really good."

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They left the Children's Park and Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took the bus back. When the bus got to the business district, pang Qian called Gu Mingxi to get off again.

She said, "It's hot. This place has air conditioning."

She walked into a mall and headed straight to the top floor to the arcade. She pulled out 20 dollars from Gu Mingxi's pocket and bought game tokens. Pang Qian found a frog hitting game (like whack-a-mole) and started playing.

It was extremely noisy in the arcade. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi caught a lot of attention from their school uniforms. Pang Qian held a hammer and pounded at the frogs in their holes. "Who told you to pop up! Get down! Get down! You dare pop up?! I'm going to flatten you..."

After two rounds, she grew bored of it. She said to Gu Mingxi, "Let's have a competition."

She didn't care whether he could play or not. She faced him and started the game. She grabbed the hammer with both hands and started hitting, whereas Gu Mingxi could only use his right foot to roughly hit some frogs.

During the game, the hammer fell from his grasp several times. He had to stop and retrieve the hammer with his feet. Pang Qian laughed at the side. After winning two rounds, she finally decided she was content and they stopped playing.

A few kids saw that Gu Mingxi didn't have arms and kept looking at him curiously. Seeing Pang Qian about to leave, someone courageously came up and asked for her QQ number. Pang Qian looked at them somewhat scared, when Gu Mingxi answered for her, "Bro, she's my girlfriend. Leave me some face."

Naturally, they couldn't play games anymore. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took the elevator down to the first floor. There were a lot of cosmetic counters there, and there was a pleasant scent floating in the air.



Pang Qian walked over to a counter and saw some an array of sample cosmetics. She looked at it, then reached out and picked up a stick of lipstick. There was only half a stick left. She faced the mirror and applied some lipstick, and then she smacked her lips together. She turned back to Gu Mingxi, "Does it look good?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head. "It's too red."

Pang Qian wiped off the lipstick with a napkin, and then applied a lighter lipstick. She asked Gu Mingxi, "What about this one?"

"It's a little better."

Pang Qian turned her head to look at herself in the mirror. Her hair was pulled back in a ponytail and she wore a school uniform, looking like a typical schoolgirl. The lipstick didn't match at all. No wonder the shopping assistant was playing with her own nails and didn't even bother to greet Pang Qian.

Pang Qian looked at the price of the lipstick. "198, that's expensive."

It was nearly time for school to let out. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went to the small park by their school. The primary school students had already finished school so the Little Market was very lively. Small groups of kids hovered around the vendor stalls to buy snacks to eat.

Pang Qian dug into her pockets. Empty. She checked Gu Mingxi's pocket, and there was only 8 dollars left. She licked her lips and then got up and went over to a stall. She bought two chocolate cones.

"Three dollars left," she giggled. "We can buy some fried stinky tofu later."

She pulled off the paper from the cones and held one in each hand. As she ate her own, she also fed Gu Mingxi. He was especially obedient that day. In the past, he wouldn't let her feed him ice cream because it would leave a mess around his mouth.

They sat side by side on a bench, the younger kids playing not too far away. There were also some elderly folks who had finished an early dinner and come to the park to exercise.

The sun was starting to go down, so it wasn't as hot as it was earlier in the



afternoon. When the cold and sweet cone entered her mouth, Pang Qian shivered.

“Ey, it feels good!” Pang Qian looked at the lower part of the ice cream cone wrapping. There was a pair of cartoon characters kissing on it. She couldn’t help recalling the scene from that morning. She suddenly turned to the person beside her and asked, “Gu Mingxi, have you kissed before?”

Gu Mingxi had just taken a bite of the ice cream and suddenly nearly choked on it. He started coughing and Pang Qian pat his back. He lifted his head to look at her, a bit of chocolate at the corners of his mouth.

Pang Qian asked again, “Have you kissed before?” Then she answered herself. “Probably not. You’ve never dated before.”

A layer of red appeared on Gu Mingxi’s cheeks. “Then, have you?”

Pang Qian shook her head. “No, never.”

Gu Mingxi turned his head away. He felt that the edge of his lips had something, sticky and uncomfortable. He turned his head and tried to wipe it away with his right shoulder.

When Pang Qian saw, she finished her own ice cream in two big bites. She said, “Don’t move, your clothes will get dirty.”

She searched through her and Gu Mingxi’s pockets, but there wasn’t a single napkin. Pang Qian used her fingers to wipe away the chocolate around his mouth.

As she wiped it away, she asked, “Gu Mingxi, what do you think a kiss feels like?”

“...” Gu Mingxi lifted his eyes to look at her. Dark eyes like the summer night’s stars in the sky. He licked his lips, but didn’t say anything.

Pang Qian said, “Is it really very sweet...”

Before she finished speaking, the boy in front of her had already bent down. He tilted his head, closed his eyes, and his lips pressed onto her lips.

A somewhat sticky, somewhat dry, somewhat soft, and somewhat sweet kiss.



It was just a gentle touch, nothing deep or exploring. After a quick taste, he immediately straightened his back.

“A kiss is probably something like this. It’s not a big deal.” He did his best to suppress the restlessness inside him as he spoke calmly. But the girl in front of him was already very obviously in a not so good state.

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# Chapter 64

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 64 Final Year

*This year might change the rest of our lives.*

---

That day, the weather was very nice. E City hadn't entered the rainy season yet, so every day was clear with high temperatures.

Thy sky was bright blue. The trees in the park were lush and green, and the cicadas were singing loudly. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian had spent most of the afternoon playing around, so their bodies were covered in sweat. After the sweat dried off, their clothes were soaked again from the water ride. At this point in time, their hair both stuck to their foreheads, their bodies were sticky and kind of dirty. It was a bit embarrassing, but also a bit comical.

Younger students who were buying meat skewers and sausages walked past them. As they ate their snacks, they also looked at the pair curiously. That older boy and girl in school uniforms, were they just kissing?

The young girls were gathering and whispering to each other about it. Gu Mingxi lifted his head, looked over at them, and gave a gentle smile. A few of the girls panicked, their faces turning red, as they immediately ran off.

Pang Qian was still sitting stunned on the bench in front of him. She had two ice cream wrappers in her hands, a bit of chocolate still in them.

She seemed unable to react. She wasn't sure what had just happened, nor what she should be doing now. From Gu Mingxi's tone, a kiss really did seem as ordinary as eating food and sleeping, nothing special at all.

But that was her first kiss!

Although it was only a moment's thing, but the moment his lips touched hers was very obvious. His lips were soft and carried the slight scent of his breath. It



made Pang Qian stiffen as her heart nearly jumped out of her chest.

She felt that she ought to get angry, just like the main character in all the serial dramas. When the male steals a kiss from the female, doesn't she always slap him on the face? But when she stole a glance at Gu Mingxi, she quickly got rid of that idea. He was Gu Mingxi, how could she bear to hit him?

Then was just the end of it? No, no, no. That would make it seem like she was okay with it. She wasn't okay with it! Pang Qian recalled Xiao Yujing's reaction earlier that afternoon to a similar situation. She calmly wiped her lips, and then turned around and went back to the classroom.

Should she follow Xiao Yujing and wipe her lips to show that she was unhappy?

Then she also recalled Xie Yi's reaction afterwards. Seeing Xiao Yujing wipe her lips, his entire face dimmed. His expression changed, showing an obvious disappointment. Pang Qian didn't want to see Gu Mingxi hurt. Although she didn't know why he acted this way, she felt that doing nothing was the most appropriate reaction.

But this was really her first kiss! Would her first kiss just disappear like that?

Lots of different thoughts ran through her head, and her expression also changed greatly. Gu Mingxi didn't say a word, and only watched her silently. Finally, after her entire face was red, Gu Mingxi started, "What are you thinking about? We just touched briefly. When foreigners meet, they all do that to greet each other."

Did he really think she was such a bumpkin? Pang Qian clenched her teeth, "Don't lie to me. Foreigners all kiss each others' cheeks. They don't just randomly kiss each other on the lips."

"A kiss on the cheek is nearly a kiss on the lips," Gu Mingxi said. "If you mind, you can forget what just happened. Strictly speaking, this doesn't count as a kiss. You can just say it didn't happen."

"Ah?" Pang Qian's eyes widened. "Pretend it didn't happen?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. "Yeah, so, you can still have your first kiss."

Pang Qian's face reddened again. Gu Mingxi stood up and said, "Pang Pang,



it's almost time for school to let out. We should go back, otherwise the teacher might report this to the police."

Hearing him say that, Pang Qian finally remembered this. She made Gu Mingxi cut class. She didn't know what kind of situation they would face when they returned.

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Pang Qian, who had boldly left school earlier that afternoon, was now terrified of returning to school. Gu Mingxi comforted her, "Don't be afraid. Just tell them what I told you, and the teachers won't be too hard on you. At worst, they'll blame you for not giving them a call to notify them. Then you just tell that that you were afraid calling would waste time and you'd lose me."

When did he think up all these things? Pang Qian asked, "Then what if you get in trouble?"

Gu Mingxi said, "Then I'll just get scolded. Usually, the teachers all take good care of me. They probably won't scold me."

When they returned to the school, the guard rushed out and called, "Aiya! You two are finally back!"

The school was in utter chaos. Year 2 Class 1's Gu Mingxi and Class 2's Pang Qian randomly disappeared during the lunch break. Their belongings were still at their desks, and they hadn't left any notes. It seemed like they'd just gone to the restroom, and then they just disappeared without warning.

Their head teachers were thrown into a frenzy, especially since Gu Mingxi was a handicapped student. They called the kids' parents, but Pang Shuisheng and Li Han returned home without finding a trace of their kids.

In the afternoon, Teachers Dai and Zhong, along with some student council members and Pang Shuisheng and Li Han, started searching around the school. Xie Yi even went to Shark's barbecue shop, but it wasn't open yet. He ran around to check some internet bars in the area, but he still didn't find and trace Gu Mingxi or Pang Qian.

Xiao Yujing went to check the small park nearby the school. After being deskmates with Gu Mingxi for a year, she knew that Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian



sometimes sat at that park for awhile to eat snacks before heading home. Of course, she didn't find anything.

When it was nearly time for school to let out, everyone met back up at the school. Jin Ai'hua stayed at home, waiting for any news. Pang Shuisheng was extremely confused by the fact that Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi left their bags behind. Li Han was already weeping quietly. Gu Mingxi was a very sensible person. Even if he was feeling some pressure at school, he'd never skipped class before, especially without leaving any notes before disappearing.

As the group of people were discussing whether they should make a police report, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian returned.

In front of her teachers, classmates, and parents, Pang Qian couldn't lie. But neither did she speak the truth. She just stood there silently with her head down. Gu Mingxi stood beside her, slightly blocking her. Then he methodically went over "the happenings of the day" with everyone.

He saw a flash of suspicious cross Xiao Yujing's eyes. Teacher Dai stared at Gu Mingxi and said, "Gu Mingxi, if you felt pressure, you could have come talk to me. If you just disappear without a sound, everyone will worry about you, don't you know?"

"Teacher Dai, I'm sorry. I won't do it again." Gu Mingxi chuckled lightly. "Pang Qian kept trying to make me come back. Thanks to her, I'm fine now."

Since Gu Mingxi had taken all the responsibility, no one was going to give out any blame. Teacher Dai and Teacher Zhong let out sighs and even praised Pang Qian with a few lines. Pang Shuisheng and Li Han apologized to the teachers and students, and then took their kids home.

That evening, Jin Ai'hua scolded Pang Qian a lot. Pang Shuisheng couldn't hold her back. Jin Ai'hua was angry to death. As she yelled, she smacked Pang Qian's head with a *pa! pa!*

She said, "Are you crazy? Have you gone crazy?! Do you like Gu Mingxi that much?! Ah?! He was in a bad mood, he was feeling too much pressure! So he skipped class to go play! And you just followed him?! You've never skipped class before! Gu Mingxi started acting badly last year. Now he's dragged you along with him!"



Pang Qian retorted loudly, “He hasn’t gone bad! His grades are still great!”

“Who gives a damn about his grades?!” Jin Ai’hua sat down beside the table and angrily slammed her hand down. “Pang Qian, let me tell you. It’s best if you cut off this relationship. I won’t agree to you and Gu Mingxi being together! It doesn’t matter how much you like him, I won’t agree to it!”

Pang Qian had been beaten until her head hurt, but she shouted out again, “Who said I like him?! Who said I want to be together with him?!”

Jin Ai’hua knocked on Pang Qian’s head again and made herself clear. “You think I’m a fool?! If you didn’t like him, why would you skip class to go out and play with him all afternoon?!”

Pang Qian lowered her head and covered it with her arms. Gasping for air, she was unable to refute.

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In the next few days, Jin Ai’hua didn’t allow Pang Qian to go over to Gu Mingxi’s house to do homework. Pang Qian didn’t care. In any case, the final exams were coming up. She didn’t mind relaxing a bit.

The first order of business was the high school certification exam. For students attending advanced high schools, this exam was merely a formality. Pang Qian easily finished the exam, thinking to herself that she never wanted to touch history or politics again.

Following that were the final exams. Since this exam marked the end of the liberal arts and science materials, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi wouldn’t need to test in those again. This final exam would determine the class rearrangements for the final year’s classes. The school made the exam more difficult, and Pang Qian could feel that after she finished.

Without the language classes, Gu Mingxi’s grades rose up. He was 4th in the year for science, keeping his promise to his mother. Xiao Yujing was still first. Xie Yi’s rank also rose to first in Class 7, and his grades qualified him to move into the advanced class next semester.

Zheng Qiaoqiao improved, Li Xiaoyan improved, Wang Song and Zhou Nanzhong improved. Only Pang Qian’s grades dropped.



In all of the 297 students who took the science exam, Pang Qian's scores only ranked her 245. Seeing the mess of her exam paper, she just sat in her chair zoning out.

When it was time for the parent-teacher meeting, Pang Qian snuck over to Gu Mingxi's. He was home alone, watching TV.

Pang Qian sat down beside him. Gu Mingxi said, "There are drinks in the refrigerator if you want any."

Pang Qian lowered and shook her head. Gu Mingxi turned to her. "You just did poorly on one final exam. Why are you so downcast? There's still one more year. There's still time if you try really hard."

Pang Qian pulled at her shirt hem. In a low voice, she said, "Gu Mingxi, I don't think I can go to the same university as you. You'll definitely get into a top-tier school. I probably won't even get into a third-rank school."

"No." Gu Mingxi comforted her, "I know that you're feeling down recently. It's normal that you'd have tested poorly. There's still another year. I'll work hard together with you. I'm sure you'll get into a four-year university, at least second-ranked."

Pang Qian felt that he was spewing nonsense, so she didn't take his words to heart. She sat down a bit, and then suddenly said, "Why is Xiao Yujing so good at studying?"

"Xiao Yujing?" Gu Mingxi was startled. "You only see that she's doing well now, but you don't know all the efforts she put into it before."

Pang Qian lifted her head, "How do you know?"

"She said so herself. She lived in South Africa when she was younger, so her Chinese wasn't very good. Her mother had to go over a lot of classes with her at home. After primary school, she returned (to China) with her parents. Aside from English, her grades in other classes were all rotten."

Pang Qian would never have imagined that Xiao Yujing had done through such a period.

Gu Mingxi continued, "After her first year of junior high, she retook the year.



When it was time for the final exams, she finally caught up with the others in her class. By the end of her second year, she was first in her class. After her third year, she became first in the year.”

Pang Qian was shocked.

“She’s definitely very smart, but most importantly, she worked really hard.” Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian. “Xiao Yujing told me that you only live once. Human society is much like that of the African savanna. Like the law of the jungle, the strong prey on the weak. If you don’t want to be the prey to someone else, you just have to put all your efforts into running forward. As long as you do your best, even if you don’t achieve what you had planned, at least you won’t have any regrets in your life.”

Pang Qian’s eyes dropped as she considered Gu Mingxi’s words.

“Pang Pang, there’s still one year. One whole year.” Gu Mingxi sat up straight, staring at Pang Qian’s eyes. “Listen to me. In this final year, let’s not think about any nonsense. Just work hard on studying. This year might change the rest of our lives. I hope we can work hard together, get rid of any obstructions, and both get into a good school. Don’t be afraid, I’ll always be by your side. Look, Xiao Yujing could push into first with one year. Xie Yi got into the advanced class after one semester. You can try to use this semester to get into the top 20. Nothing is impossible. Pang Pang, I hope that you can trust me, and push through this final year together with me. Okay?”

Pang Qian looked at him with red eyes. Then with some effort, she nodded. “Okay.”

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# Chapter 65

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year

### 65 The Meaning of Forever

*Gu Mingxi, I'm lovelorn.*

---

Pang Qian stopped telling Gu Mingxi about wanting to confess to Xie Yi. And understanding, he didn't bring it up either.

She took the scene from that afternoon and pushed it deep inside, deciding not to tell anyone else about it.

When school started again, Xie Yi moved to the advanced class. He was in the same class as Xiao Yujing. Pang Qian thought, he must be happy.

This year was the last year there would be a black July. Starting next year, the college entrance exams would be held in June. (From 1978-2002, the national college entrance exam was held on July 7th, but from 2003 onward, it's held in June.) After the results for this year came back, First High arranged for all the students in advanced classes to take a simulation college entrance exam.

That day, when Pang Qian heard that Gu Mingxi was going to school for the test, she was very bored. She said, "I'll go with you."

She was worried it would be inconvenient for him to take the bus on his own. Actually, when Gu Mingxi moved to City West for a year, he often took the bus by himself. Of course, he didn't turn down Pang Qian's offer. The two of them went to school, and while Gu Mingxi went to take his exam, Pang Qian went to the ping pong gym.

Although it was already summer break, the gym wasn't closed. There were a few ping pong team members practicing there. Pang Qian suddenly thought that when school started up again, she probably wouldn't come to play anymore. She couldn't help but let out a sigh.



She looked around the gym. It was the most advanced high school ping pong arena in all of E City. It was the biggest reason that enticed Xie Yi to First High. And it was what bound Xie Yi and Pang Qian together.

Someone saw Pang Qian and called out happily, “Crab, let’s play together!”

Pang Qian said, “Sure!”

The boy handed her a paddle. “The King was just here, but he left for the exam.”

“Oh.”

“Kid must be pleased with himself, he’s going to be in the same class as Goddess Xiao next semester. Who knows, he might have to torture himself and study tirelessly, without being able to come to practice anymore.”

Pang Qian giggled and said quietly, “You know he likes Xiao Yujing too.”

The boy laughed loudly, “The whole team probably knows. The King’s been chasing Goddess Xiao for several months now.”

Pang Qian stared at him.

He asked, “What, you didn’t know?”

Pang Qian bounced the ball on her paddle. With a smile, “Just kidding with you. Of course I knew.”

She played intermittently over the next two hours. When she was tired and covered in sweat, she sat down to rest at the side of the gym. She suspected that the exam would be done by then.

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Pang Qian went to the first floor of the academic building to wait for Gu Mingxi. Awhile later, the students who’d taken the exam came out in twos and threes. Gu Mingxi carried his backpack and walked out with Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi beside him. The three of them were discussing the exam questions.

When he saw Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi smiled. Xie Yi said, “Hey, Pang Qian, you came too. Let’s go out for lunch. We can find a place and pick a few dishes.”

Pang Qian glanced over at Xiao Yujing, thinking to herself that she didn’t want



to go. She didn't expect that Xiao Yujing would beat her to it. "I'm not going. I have to head home to eat."

Xie Yi said, "We have to take another test at 1:30. Why are you going home?"

"I told my grandma that I'd be home for lunch. See you in the afternoon. Bye." Xiao Yujing left just like that. Xie Yi clenched his teeth as he watched her head off. He turned back to Gu Mingxi, "Then, let's go to eat, the three of us."

Pang Qian still didn't want to go. As she was about to reject him, Gu Mingxi said, "Sorry, me and Pang Qian also have to head home for lunch."

Pang Qian was so touched that she could cry. She immediately nodded in agreement. "Yeah, my grandma is also making lunch."

The abandoned Xie Yi was stunned, and he could only look for some ping pong team members to eat lunch with.

Of course, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian didn't go home. They walked a bit and found a KFC and went inside for the air conditioning and to eat.

It was really inconvenient for Gu Mingxi to eat the food at KFC, but it was the only place where they could rest comfortably in the middle of the day. And since Pang Qian liked it, he didn't mind. Pang Qian bought two hamburgers and a drink for them. Just as usual, she put the hamburger box on the table and Gu Mingxi lowered his head to eat it like that.

Eating food in that manner was a bit awkward, and his mouth would inevitably be stained by sauce. Thankfully, Pang Qian would help him to wipe his mouth. She even fed him a piece of spicy chicken wing. In any case, with Pang Qian's help, Gu Mingxi pretty much ate his fill.

After they finished eating, they stayed inside the KFC to rest a bit longer. The two of them sat in a corner, Gu Mingxi on a sofa against the wall. Seeing that there was no one beside him, he lifted his feet up onto the chair, exercising his feet and toes.

Pang Qian saw this and immediately moved to sit next to Gu Mingxi. She asked, "Was there an essay question on the exam? Do your toes hurt?"

Gu Mingxi quietly said, "Mm." Pang Qian said, "There's still the math and



English tests in the afternoon. Should I give you a massage?”

Gu Mingxi said a bit embarrassed, “No need...”

“It’s fine. “Pang Qian had already pulled his right foot onto her thighs and started twisting his ankle and stretching his toes. She helped loosen the muscles in his calves and thighs by patting them. Gu Mingxi was a bit uncomfortable with it at first, but gradually his guard came down.

He was wearing a pair of knee-length shorts, his calves exposed. Around his right ankle, there was still the anklet that Pang Qian had gifted him, although the color had faded somewhat. His legs were already like those of a grown man, slender, fit, shapely, beautiful. His knees were pretty, and just like other grown men, his legs were covered in hair. Unlike others though, his legs were covered in a bunch of different-sized bruises, from all the bike accidents, tripping down the stairs, slipping on the ground...

A long time ago, Pang Qian had seen the scar on his right ankle, and at the time, she’d been greatly startled. When she asked where the scar was from, Gu Mingxi immediately spun a lie. “I tried to cut some fruit to eat once, and I accidentally cut myself.”

Pang Qian didn’t suspect that he was lying at all, since she rarely suspected his words. In some ways, she believed the things that Gu Mingxi said more than she believed her own father.

Her fingers grazed over the scar on his ankle. This was the way Gu Mingxi lived, relying entirely on his pair of legs to control his life.

Pang Qian looked down and used her fingers to press Gu Mingxi’s calf and turn his ankle and toes. Then she suddenly started to wonder, if it was her who had climbed up the transformer back then, if it was her who’d lost her two arms, what would things be like right now?

She lifted her head to look at him, and realized he’d fallen asleep. His head was tilted against the sofa, his legs resting on Pang Qian’s legs, eyes closed soundly asleep.

His right shoulder was against the back of the sofa, his sleeves folded in, outlining the shape of his shoulders. Pang Qian stared foolishly at him. Gu Mingxi



had a handsome face, a healthy physique, a smart mind, but would forever have only this crippled body.

What is the meaning of forever?

Forever meant all the days left in your lifetime, all the hours, all the minutes and seconds. It meant without exception.

That was what Gu Mingxi's forever meant.

In this moment, an idea suddenly floated into Pang Qian's head.

That was, she wanted to keep staying with Gu Mingxi.

Pang Qian didn't have any notion of love, responsibility, and marriage. As for "forever," this was a romantic word.

She wasn't sure what exactly it was between her and Gu Mingxi. It was all rather vague. She knew that they were very special to each other, that their relationship was one of a kind. But to call that love wasn't something Pang Qian could agree with.

She felt that it should be a relationship that was more than family, friendship, or love.

Regardless, she thought that no matter what this relationship was, she wanted to continually stay with Gu Mingxi.

In the afternoon, the students from the advanced class took the math and English exams, one after the other. They started at 1:30, and each exam was two hours long with a half hour break in between. When they finished, it would already be 6 PM.

Gu Mingxi didn't want Pang Qian to wait that long, but she said it didn't matter, that she wanted to go home with him.

While Gu Mingxi was taking his test, Pang Qian went to the nearby Xinhua bookstore. Sitting on the ground, with her back against the wall, she started to read leisurely.

When the clock at the bookstore read 5:30, Pang Qian headed back to the school. She went over to the empty school yard by herself and walked up the stands. With her chin in her hands, she stared off.



The weather was very hot and she was drenched in sweat. Occasionally, a breeze would come, carrying the warmth of the summer. Pang Qian turned her head towards the nearby academic building. The bell sounded, signalling the end of the exam. She sat still, waiting until that youth walked towards her with his bag on his back.

He walked up the stand with large strides, causing his empty shirtsleeves to flutter continuously.

Pang Qian wiped the sweat from her face and smiled as she asked, "How was the test?"

"Okay." Gu Mingxi was also smiling. He sat down beside her and shrugged his backpack off. "Did you wait long? Was it hot?"

Pang Qian shook her head. "I went to the bookstore to read. I just got back."

Gu Mingxi said, "When we go home, I'll buy you a popsicle."

"Gu Mingxi, you keep treating me like a child." Pang Qian looked at him with some dissatisfaction. "I'll be 17 years old next month."

Gu Mingxi's smile stretched wider as he said, "Who was it who wanted to buy the kid's meal at KFC this afternoon so they could play with the toy?"

"So annoying!" She hit him playfully, using very little strength, acting quite coquettishly.

As the sun set in the west, the two of them sat shoulder to shoulder on the stands watching.

It was more than a week into summer break, and Pang Qian actually hadn't left the house (until today). She's nearly suffocated in there. Now, she didn't want to go home. She said to Gu Mingxi, "Sit with me here awhile."

He nodded without any objections.

A light breeze blew at their faces, blowing at the hair beside their ears. The sky in the west had been gorgeously stained red by the setting sun. She sat with her chin in her hands, thoughts flying all around inside her head.

She suddenly recalled a game Zheng Qiaoqiao had taught her. She leaned in



close to Gu Mingxi's ear and started blinking her eyes rapidly. Gu Mingxi was startled by her but didn't duck away. Her long, curled eyelashes gently brushed the side of his ear. She asked, "Is it fun? Does it itch? Is it a comfortable feeling?"

Gu Mingxi lowered his head, held his breath for a long time, before letting out a, "Mm."

"Ah? Really? Now use your eyelashes to scratch my ear!" Pang Qian straightened her body excitedly. She started thinking that with eyelashes as thick as his, this would be a fun game.

When she turned her head to look at him, she realized that the face of the silent youth beside her was completely red.

Gu Mingxi stood up, and said curtly, "Let's go. The sun's already setting."

Pang Qian pouted at him, "You didn't scratch me!"

He slipped off his shoes and used his toes to scratch her calf under her shorts. After he scratched a few strokes, he said, "Alright, I scratched you."

Without waiting for her to jump up, he started hopping down the stands, a few steps at a time. As he ran, he yelled back, "Pang Pang, don't forget to bring my backpack!"

"Gu Mingxi, don't you run away!" Pang Qian finally jumped up, grabbed his backpack, and chased after him.

She quickly caught up to him. She stood on her tiptoes and grabbed his ears with her hands. Gu Mingxi cried out, as if it really hurt, and Pang Qian immediately let go.

She grabbed onto his shoulders, the two of them laughing as they walked along the street. As they continued on, Pang Qian's smile disappeared. She said softly, "Gu Mingxi, I'm lovelorn."

Gu Mingxi stood tall and straight, his chin raised slightly towards the distance. The fire-red clouds mixed together with the setting sun, moving forward, changing unpredictably.

In the end, Gu Mingxi didn't say anything.

— My Mister Ostrich —







# Chapter 66

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 66 Becoming an Adult

*There are some things...that you know, we'll talk about it after we get into college, okay?*

---

When summer break started, Gu Mingxi helped Pang Qian catch up on all the material from school. He helped her explain the things she didn't quite understand, do a lot of practice problems, and even acted as a teacher to grade and explain what she did wrong.

Sometimes his supervision really irritated Pang Qian. Seeing all the yet to be done practice tests and questions, she would throw a small tantrum. Gu Mingxi knew that Pang Qian was the kind of person who needed to be rewarded along with her punishments, so when she didn't want to work on the practice problems, he would go out to play with her.

That August, Gu Mingxi became an adult. Because his 18th birthday by the lunar calendar was only one day off from Pang Qian's 17th birthday by the Gregorian calendar, the two families decided to celebrate them together.

On the day of Pang Qian's birthday, Li Han and Gu Mingxi went to Pang Qian's house. Pang Shuisheng prepared a big table of dishes, and he also bought a large birthday cake so the two kids could blow out the candles.

Pang Qian gave Gu Mingxi a pair of Adidas flip flops. They were pretty expensive, and she had to scrimp together pocket money for several months to get it.

Two days later was the Qixi Festival. Gu Mingxi asked his mother if he and Pang Qian could spend the day out, and Li Han agreed.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian went to Shark's barbecue shop. When Shark found



out it was Gu Mingxi's 18th birthday, he was extremely excited and he put out a table of food. He also called for Clam and Oyster to barbecue a big plate of lamb skewers and chicken wings.

Shark opened a few bottles of cold beer. "Kid, you're an adult now, a man. And it's summer break now. Have a bit of beer!"

Gu Mingxi didn't reject the offer, and Shark poured him a cup of beer and plopped a straw inside. Pang Qian watched curiously and said, "Shark, I want to drink it too."

Shark gave her a can of cola. "Not you. You're still a kid. Next year! Next year, you come again and I'll make sure you guys don't leave without getting a bit drunk!"

To make it easier on Gu Mingxi when he ate, Shark found a short table and placed it outside the shop. They sat around the table, eating and drinking. Gu Mingxi was completely relaxed. He had his right foot up on the table holding onto a barbecue stick, his head lowered to take a bite.

Clam still couldn't forget about Pang Qian. He asked, "Little Crab, didn't you add me on QQ before? Why did you put me on your blacklist after that?"

Pang Qian blinked her eyes at him. "I didn't. I haven't been online in a long time. My house doesn't have a computer. I can only go online when I go to Gu Mingxi's place."

Clam immediately turned to look at Gu Mingxi, who was slightly biting onto his straw and drinking beer, as if he hadn't heard anything at all.

Shark asked Gu Mingxi, "When school starts, you two will be seniors. Are you going to have a lot more schoolwork then?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. "Yeah. We'll have to go to school on Saturdays too, and also go to self-study at night."

"If you or Little Crab ever feel too much pressure, you can always come here to sit awhile and relax a bit. This is called striking a balance between work and play," Shark said. "And didn't you two say you were going to go to school in Shanghai? Then after next year, we won't be able to meet much anymore. When you guys pass your college exams, I'll have a celebratory banquet here for you."



It'll also be a farewell party at the same time."

Gu Mingxi couldn't help laughing. "Shark, you've thought a bit far into the future."

Shark lit a cigarette. "Far? These things are right in front of your eyes."

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After they ate and drank to their content, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got ready to head home.

Pang Qian ate a lot of chicken wings so her stomach was bloated. She told Gu Mingxi not to get on the bus right away, and to walk around a little bit and digest first.

There were a lot of immigrant workers in the machine factory area. On summer evenings, a lot of people would be out walking on the street. And so, a lot of small shops opened up along the street.

Pang Qian saw a small cosmetics shop and pulled Gu Mingxi inside. She saw the basket of colorful 5-dollar nail polish, and then her interest was caught on an 8 dollar tube of lipstick.

Gu Mingxi walked up to her and saw that she was about to spread the cheap lipstick onto her lips, and he immediately said, "Don't put it on!"

Pang Qian turned to look at him, and Gu Mingxi's face was oddly red. In a low voice, he said, "Your birthday present's in my pants pocket. Take it out yourself."

Pang Qian was pleasantly surprised and quickly pulled it out of his pocket. She looked at the item in her hands, and it was a brand new tube of lipstick.

There was a fine, matte black case wrapped in plastic. It was the brand that she'd tried on at the mall before.

"Wow! This is really expensive!" Pang Qian was extremely happy. "Thank you, Gu Mingxi!"

The happy Pang Qian saw a photo booth inside a shop they were passing by. She dragged Gu Mingxi inside to take pictures.

Gu Mingxi had never taken those kinds of photos before. Pang Qian seriously considered which background to use as she pulled him inside the booth. The



curtains on either side of them were pulled closed, with just the two of them in that small space.

Pang Qian looked at them on the screen, and couldn't help saying, "Gu Mingxi, you're so handsome!"

Gu Mingxi curled his lips, looking a bit shy. He turned his head side to side a little and watched his image turning on the screen. Pang Qian picked an angle and pressed the button.

"So good looking!" She leaned to the screen to look at the photo they'd just taken. She felt that Gu Mingxi was even more handsome than those Hong Kong and Taiwanese celebrities. But the photo also captured his empty, hanging sleeves.

Gu Mingxi said, "I'm not taking these. Do it yourself."

Pang Qian turned to look at him but didn't say anything. She vainly took a few pictures by herself, but when it was time to take two larger photos, she pulled Gu Mingxi back beside her and said, "Let's take two together. You can take one and I'll take one. This is a photo from your 18th birthday. It'll be memorable!"

Gu Mingxi naturally didn't refuse. He very obediently stood beside Pang Qian, and they took a photo together.

The two of them both had smiles on their faces. Pang Qian inspected it and said, "This one looks really stiff."

And then, without any explanation, she hugged Gu Mingxi and pulled his waist down. She stood on her tiptoes so that their faces were level. She reached her arm over and pressed the button, and a photo appeared with a brightly smiling teenaged girl and a boy whose face looked slightly drunk.

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When they returned to the Golden Compound, the alcohol had gone a bit to Gu Mingxi's head. It was his first time drinking beer, and his head felt a bit heavy. He suddenly became very excited and said to Pang Qian, "Didn't you say before that you wanted me to give you a ride on my bike? Let's try it!"

"Ah?" Pang Qian asked with surprise. "Right now?"



“Yeah, I just added air to the tires a couple days ago.”

Gu Mingxi really rode his bike and gave Pang Qian a ride. His shoulders rested against the specially-made stand on his bike, and Pang Qian sat sideways behind him, holding tightly to his waist.

Gu Mingxi had never given anyone a ride before. With some difficulty, he started to ride the bike as it swayed back and forth slightly. Pang Qian was scared to death, but she didn't dare to shout out loud in the compound. She could only smack Gu Mingxi's back and say quietly, “Be careful!”

The compound was dark, except for the slits of light shining out from the windows of people's homes. Every once in awhile, you could hear Old Zeng's dog, Wang Wang, barking. Gu Mingxi rode his bike around the garden a few times. His courage kept growing, and he suddenly changed directions and rode outside the compound.

“Hey!” Pang Qian cried out, though she didn't dare to struggle. When the bike reached the street, she couldn't help shouting out, “Gu Mingxi, if you make me fall off, I'm not going to forgive you!”

He was actually riding pretty fast as well. Pang Qian's skirt flew up in the wind. She shouted out loud as she held tightly onto his waist, only able to hear his faint laughter.

“Don't worry, I don't make you fall.” His lips were in a wide smile as he rode around on the street in high spirits. Very soon, he rode over to where the metal factory originally was.

The area had become a large construction site. There were a several pile drivers inside and work lights, the image of the past long gone. It was already quite late, so no one was working there. Gu Mingxi stopped the bike with his left foot. Pang Qian jumped off and stood beside him, looking at the scene before them.

She said, “My dad tole me that they're building a mall here with a market and movie theater, and also a large plaza. A lot of the small restaurants around here will be turned into shopping stores, and this place will become a commercial center.”



Gu Mingxi nodded. “My mom told me the same. She said it would take three or four years.”

Pang Qian turned her head to look at him. Gu Mingxi’s eyes sparkled, and sweat beads dripped down his face from his forehead. She looked at his slender neck and the traces of sweat above. His body exuded the feeling of a young man, no longer the little boy he used to be.

When he rode back home with Pang Qian, she held tightly to his waist and her face stuck to his warm back. She asked, “Gu Mingxi, do you like me?”

The youth’s heart skipped a beat as he rode. He was silent for awhile, before answering, “Mm, I like you.”

“What kind of like is it?”

He thought again, and said, “It’s the kind of like that you’re thinking of.”

Pang Qian couldn’t see his face. She said lightly, “Is it the kind of like, like I like you?”

He couldn’t help smiling slightly. He nodded, “Yeah, just like the way you like me.”

“Gu Mingxi.”

“Hm?”

“You’re the one who said, we shouldn’t think about anything this year.”

“I did say that. What about it?”

“So I decided not to think about anything. There are some things...that you know, we’ll talk about it after we get into college, okay?”

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 67

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 67 Mountain of Books, Sea of Questions

*Ah? You're really going to study accounting?*

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When Gu Mingxi walked inside the front door, his heart hadn't calmed down, still pounding intensely in his chest. He went to the bathroom and sat down on a plastic chair, lifting his foot to open a low tap on the wall.

Water flowed out and he cleaned his feet. Then he bent his head down and used his right foot to scrub his face. The water in summertime was always hot, so Gu Mingxi wanted to wash his face off with some cold water to calm himself. But the more he washed, the more excited he became.

When he walked out of the bathroom, his clothes were dripping with water. Li Han was startled and she grabbed a towel to help him dry his face. She complained, "Your clothes are all wet."

Gu Mingxi looked away and said quietly, "It was too hot so I wanted to cool down."

They walked to the living room and Li Han picked up a box on the table for Gu Mingxi to see. "Mingxi, your dad came by."

Gu Mingxi was shocked as Li Han helped him open the box. "Since it's your 18th birthday today, he was going to pick you up to have a meal together. Your (paternal) grandparents haven't seen you in awhile either. But you weren't here, so he left this and left."

Li Han held a bar-shaped Nokia cellphone in her hand. She said softly, "This is your father's birthday present. He didn't set up a number yet, but said for you to bring your ID and set it up yourself. He said you're grown up, and since you're heading to university next year, you should have a phone. But we're not sure if



it's convenient for you to use."

Gu Mingxi stared at the phone in his mother's hands for awhile. he said, "I'll accept it first, but I won't use it for now."

He returned to his room, and pulled off his shorts with his feet. He sat down on his bed with his legs crossed, and he shook his pants with his foot until a small picture dropped out of his pocket.

Gu Mingxi looked at the two smiling faces on the photo. He stroked the girl's face with his big toe as his emotions calmed. He looked over to his desk. School would start in less than half a month.

At the same time, next door in Apt. 501, Pang Qian also had that photo in her hands. There was a missing picture on her photo sheet. It was the one with her standing side by side with Gu Mingxi. At the time, she'd wanted to delete it and retake the photo, but Gu Mingxi stopped her. He said he really like it, to leave it for him.

Pang Qian had the photo of the two of their faces next to each other. She was smiling happily, and Gu Mingxi looked a bit awkward. Pang Qian carefully cut out the two-inch photo and slipped it to her wallet. Her ID card covered it, so even with careful inspection, you wouldn't see it.

And so, she hid away the photo, just as she did with her feelings. Pang Qian sat at her desk, zoning out. Then she pulled out a hardcover notebook from her drawer. This was a notebook she'd used for a long time. She didn't write anything strange in it, and she left it out openly in her drawer, not at all afraid her parents would see it. Inside, she'd copied down popular song lyrics, some classical sayings, famous words, English poems, and there were also lots of newspaper and magazine cutouts... Pang Qian flipped to an empty page and wrote earnestly:

Target June 2003. Pang Qian, work hard!

She also drew a small crab. An oval with eight legs, waving two claws.

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In September, school started up again. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi rose into Year 3. They entered into a world with mountains of books and seas of questions.



Pang Qian decided to put everything aside. Cartoons, dramas, celebrities, popular music, comics, ping pong...and the thoughts in the mind of a young girl.

Since Gu Mingxi had been supervising her throughout the summer break, she'd studied continuously. So she performed pretty well on the diagnostics test at the start of the year. In Class 7, her score put her in the upper half of the rankings. This gave her a boost of confidence. She knew that as long as she put in the effort, there would be forward progress.

Pang Qian became very serious, in an unprecedented way. Their class still had two more months of lessons before they finished the course material and entered the review period. Zheng Qiaoqiao realized that Pang Qian was never absent-minded or daydreaming in class anymore.

She very seriously listened and every prepared for class ahead of time. Before the teacher went over the lesson, she would look over the material at home. She took note of the things she didn't understand, so that she'd be able to grasp the meaning more easily when the teacher explained it.

But Pang Qian still had a bad habit. She still wasn't accustomed to asking the teacher when she didn't understand something. When she came across a problem or didn't understand something, her first thought was to ask Gu Mingxi.

—That seemingly god-like Gu Mingxi. The Gu Mingxi who promised he'd always be beside her.

November marked the final midterm exam for the high school students. Pang Qian was very serious about it, and she came out with the best score of her high school career. Ranked 153rd in the year for science. Although this was still a rather middling score, Teacher Zhong said that if Pang Qian could maintain this level, getting into a tier-3 university would be no problem.

After the midterm exams, all classes concluded, and all of the Year 3 students entered the exam review period. On the corner of the blackboard, there was a countdown to the college entrance exam. Originally, this was something that gave Pang Qian a great headache, but now it was something that gave her meaning.

With the arrival of winter, Year 3 female student Pang Qian's schedule was as follows.



Wake up at 5 o'clock. Memorize English for one hour. Wash face and brush teeth at 6:30, then eat breakfast. At 7, knock on Gu Mingxi's door and head to school together.

After arriving at school, turn in homework, and then go to class.

The teachers were putting together a syllabus in accordance with the college entrance exam, with key points to review. The most effective studying tactic though, was to work on more practice problems. On top of every student's desk, there was a pile of test papers. Sometimes Pang Qian would wonder how they could finish that many practice tests, but in the end, she still answered each test paper, question by question.

When the morning classes ended, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went to eat lunch. After eating, she dragged him to the school yard to run a few laps. They gossiped a bit and loosened their muscles. Sometimes, Pang Qian would pull Gu Mingxi up the stands and help him massage his legs.

The amount of practice problems he did were much greater than Pang Qian's, so she was worried he would get cramps.

After their outing, Pang Qian returned to her classroom and lied on her desk to sleep for half an hour. Then she would continue studying.

The changes in her were very obvious. The image Pang Qian gave out was that she was lazy, loved to eat and play, and her grades were below average. But now, the diligence and effort she put into her studies left her classmates dumbfounded.

Zheng Qiaoqiao asked Pang Qian what her goal was. She said, "Guarantee getting into a tier-2 school, aim for a tier-1. Gu Mingxi and I made a pact to go to school together in Shanghai. Although I know it's very difficult to get into the same university as Gu Mingxi, I think that if I work hard, the distance between us might not be as large."

When the afternoon classes finished, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went to the cafeteria to eat dinner. After they ate, they had more than an hour of free-time. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian made the most of this time. The two of them sat in the cafeteria and went over questions. Pang Qian wrote down all the things she wasn't sure about that day, and during this period, she had Gu Mingxi explain



them to her. Whatever he couldn't go over during that period of time, they would continue after the self-study period ended.

At 6:45 PM, the evening self-study period began. During this period, Pang Qian worked non-stop on practice problems, practice problems, practice problems... Gradually, she grew interested in studying. Before, she felt that it was a very boring thing. But now, after solving a difficult problem, she felt kind of carefree, like her whole body could relax.

Pang Qian could be considered someone who gets excited in a group of people. When things were tough, she would think that it was just one year. At most, it was one year. Gu Mingxi had said before, that as long as she persevered through this year, her life might be changed.

The evening self-study period ended at 9. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took the bus home. At this time of night, the bus was full of empty seats. Two extremely tired kids sat on the swaying bus, heads side by side, and they quickly fell asleep.

When they arrived back at the Golden Compound, the two of them said their goodnights and returned to their respective homes. She ran over the things they studied that day, and then worked on some more practice problems.

At 11 o'clock, she turned out the lights and slipped into her dreams.

Pang Qian's efforts weren't wasted. On the semester's final exam, which could be considered a practice run for the college entrance exams, Pang Qian came 118th in the year for science. She'd made the most progress in Class 7.

When Pang Shuisheng returned from the parent-teacher meeting, he was so happy that he wanted to set off firecrackers. He told Jin Ai'hua that Teacher Zhong told him that there was a high chance that Pang Qian could get into a tier-2 university.

But Pang Qian wasn't satisfied with herself. At this time, she started to regret how little effort she put in during Years 1 and 2. She started to worry that there wasn't enough time in a day. Gu Mingxi came in 2nd for science, and 1st place went to Wu Min. Pang Qian knew that he'd be able to get into a top-ranked university.

All Pang Qian remembered about Year 3 was that it was exhausting. She'd let



go of all her recreational activities. Every day, there were practice problems that she didn't finish. She never got enough sleep. When Sunday came and she had the time to make up for it, she couldn't sleep. She immediately got up and started memorizing English.

Although it was tough and exhausting, this period of time was simple and innocent. Pang Qian's mind had no distractions. Even when she ran into Xie Yi at school, her mood no longer fluctuated.

Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi never got together. According to Gu Mingxi, the two of them rarely spoke. Actually, they didn't really have the time to chat. Year 3 students at a top high school, and in the advanced class at that, really didn't have much energy to think about other things.

Multiple choice questions with ABCD choices always had a right answer. True or false questions always had a right and a wrong. On (free response) math questions, no matter how complicated or difficult or crazy, there was always a correct solution.

Years later, when Pang Qian entered society, she finally realized that it was only during school that things were so black and white, so obvious at a glance. No deception, no scheming, no pretenses.

Crying was crying, laughing was laughing, liking was liking, hating was hating.

When this time passed, it passed. No one would be able to get it back. All you could do is hold onto the memories deep in your heart.

It's a shame that at the time, Pang Qian didn't understand this.

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In Pang Qian's life, from the day she was born, she was tangled up with Gu Mingxi. They had an agreement. Even if they couldn't study at the same school, they had to study in the same city. Pang Qian never thought of her future with Gu Mingxi, or what would happen to them in the end. It wasn't that she didn't dare to think about it, but rather, she felt that she and Gu Mingxi would never separate.

18 year old Pang Qian never once thought that there would be a day where she would lose her Gu Mingxi.



In the spring of 2003, after several rounds of provincial, city, district, and school mock exams that came like bombs one after the other, Pang Qian felt a bit numb. She continued to improve, each time scoring better than the last time. On the final city mock exam, Pang Qian's score would have gotten her into a tier-1 school.

Gu Mingxi praised her, saying she was like a typical "wing-it" kind of person. Indeed, Pang Qian was a bit carefree, very cheerful and optimistic. She didn't get nervous easily. When she went into an exam with confidence, she came out with very goof results.

In mid April, the school held another parent-teacher meeting. It could also be considered a meeting about the college entrance exams. Pang Shiusheng and Li Han went to the school, leaving Gu Mingxi home alone.

Pang Qian went over to his house. The two of them studied together, and soon started chatting.

It was less than two months from the college entrance exams, so the two of them couldn't help discussing which schools they wanted to go to. Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Which school do you want to get into in Shanghai?"

Gu Mingxi looked at her, his pen dangling from his toes. He returned, "What about you? Which university do you want to get into?"

Pang Qian shook her head, "I'm not sure. I keep looking through the brochures, and some of them look nice. I just don't know which one I'll be able to get into."

Gu Mingxi smiled, "Actually, the school comes afterwards. The key point is what do you want to study?"

"I never thought about it." Pang Qian asked, "Gu Mingxi, what major do you think is better?"

Gu Mingxi said, "That depends on what kind of job you want in the future."

Pang Qian went through her mind and said seriously, "I want a white-collar job. The kind in a tall office building. Every day, I can wear high heels and a pretty dress."



At her serious tone, Gu Mingxi laughed. He said, “Then I suggest you study finance.”

“Finance?”

“Yes, going into finance would be the closest to what you want.”

Pang Qian thought for a bit, then nodded. “Finance, I’ll remember that.”

And then she asked again, “You still didn’t say where you want to go to.”

He was silent for a moment, then said, “I want to go to the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.”

Pang Qian was shocked. “Ah? You’re really going to study accounting?”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “Please, although SHUFE isn’t as good as Fudan or Jiao Tong, it’s still really hard to get into.”

Pang Qian looked at him ignorantly. Gu Mingxi said, “Actually, the finance major I told you about is also my goal.” He shrugged his shoulders causing the empty shirt sleeves to swing back and forth. He looked down at his shoulders and said, “I don’t have arms, so most professions aren’t suitable. I think that I can do well in finance. Actually, what you said isn’t wrong. Accounting is really suitable for me.”

Pang Qian knew that he was joking about that last bit. She was in no position to give Gu Mingxi any suggestions. With regards to this, he’d definitely considered things much more than she.

Gu Mingxi started telling Pang Qian about what kind of university SHUFE was again, what it was known for. As he was talking about it enthusiastically, the doorbell rang.

“Did the parent-teacher meeting end this early?” Pang Qian asked. She helped Gu Mingxi get the door. When she opened it, she just stared ahead.

Standing outside the door was someone she hadn’t seen in a long time, Gu Guoxiang.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 68

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 68 Settling Dust

*Gu Mingxi, jiayou!*

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Gu Guoxiang saw that Pang Qian was looking at him a bit blankly as she greeted him, “Uncle Gu.” Gu Guoxiang nodded and walked into the house.

Hearing voices, Gu Mingxi walked out from his room. He stood at his door without saying anything. Gu Guoxiang realized that Li Han wasn’t there, so he asked Gu Mingxi, “Mingxi, where’s your mom?”

“She went to the parent-teacher meeting.”

“Oh, today’s a parent-teacher meeting.” Gu Guoxiang nodded, then asked, “You’re going to be heading to college soon. How are your studies recently?”

“The same.” Gu Mingxi glanced at him, and then looked over to Pang Qian at the side, who seemed rather uncomfortable. “Pang Pang, you can go home first.”

Pang Qian immediately packed her things and went home.

Jin Ai’Hua was in her room watching TV. When she was Pang Qian, she asked curiously, “You just went over. You’re home so soon?”

Pang Qian climbed onto her parent’s bed, and said quietly, “Uncle Gu came by.”

“Gu Guoxiang?”

“Mm.”

“Ha! He actually had the gall to come here?” Jin Ai’hua’s face was full of disdain. “Everyone at the factory has heard about his indecent matters. He actually dares to come looking for Ah Han?”



Pang Qian asked curiously, “Mom, what happened with Uncle Gu?”

Jin Ai’hua didn’t say anything for now. “Go, go, go study. Kids shouldn’t bother with these things.”

“Aiya, if you’re acting like this, how can I just go and study.” Pang Qian grabbed onto Jin Ai’hua’s arm and asked cutely, “ Mom, tell me.”

Pang Shuisheng had instructed Jin Ai’hua not to tell Pang Qian about Gu Guoxiang’s situation. But today, Pang Shuisheng had gone to the parent-teacher meeting, and Jin Ai’hua couldn’t stop herself. In the end, she told her.

She said, “Gu Guoxiang’s mistress is pregnant. Recently, she’s been clamoring and forcing him to get divorced.”

Pang Qian, “!”

Gu Guoxiang sat in the living room, waiting for Li Han to come home. Gu Mingxi stood at the side for awhile, and then returned to his room to study.

As he sat there working on the test questions, he heard someone enter his room and walk up to him.

Gu Mingxi didn’t turn around to look. He held down his test paper with his left foot and wrote with his right foot. His table was covered with school supplies like a set square, scratch paper, pencils, erasers... When a large hand pressed down on his shoulder, Gu Mingxi stopped writing with his pen.

Gu Guoxiang stretched over to look at the test paper. Then his eyes moved to Gu Mingxi’s feet. After writing with them for twelve years, his right foot was covered in calluses. Gu Guoxiang realized he hadn’t taken notice of his son’s feet in a long time. What he remembered most was that small foot picking up a pen, a spoon, a toothbrush, images of his son practicing really hard. At that time, Gu Mingxi’s feet were pale and delicate. But now, his feet were already a grown man’s feet. His toes seemed more slender than ordinary people’s. Flexible and powerful, already skilled and familiar with the things they were doing.

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Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at him. From the moment Gu Guoxiang entered the room, he hadn’t greeted him “Dad.” Gu Mingxi knew that Gu Guoxiang hadn’t really treated him poorly, but there are some things that you



just can't make up for by giving a hundred dollars in monthly pocket money or buying someone whatever they wanted. Gu Mingxi wasn't the kind of person to hold grudges easily. It was the opposite. He was more willing to remember the good in a person. But towards Gu Guoxiang, he really felt terrible for his mother.

His parents used to be an ideal couple, loving and affectionate, the envy of those around them. But they'd ended up in this state now.

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and said to him, "Dad, why are you looking for Mom?"

"Mm, there's something I want to discuss with her."

Gu Mingxi immediately recalled the talk his father had with him a year earlier. He couldn't help raising his voice. "Dad! You don't have to talk to Mom about the things you told me last year. It's not like you don't know her. She'd never agree to it! Do you have to make her angry again?!"

Gu Guoxiang's face darkened a bit. He said, "I know. I'm looking for her for something else."

Gu Mingxi grew alert as he looked at him. Gu Guoxiang's gaze softened, and he changed the topic. He asked, "Mingxi, have you thought about which university you want to go to?"

"No," he answered coldly. "I'll think about it when the results are out."

Gu Guoxiang said seriously, "Actually, you should think about it before then. Then you should go to ask the school. Tell the recruiter about your disability and your academic history, and then ask if they'd be able to accept you if your scores were good enough, considering your condition."

Seeing Gu Mingxi's face drop, Gu Guoxiang continues, "You can't be like the other students who wait for their results and then choose a school. If you don't discuss your situation with the schools beforehand, it's more likely that they'll reject you. All the schools can easily reject you for being unable to care for yourself."

Gu Mingxi said loudly, "I can take care of myself!"

"You can't take care of yourself 100%," Gu Guoxiang said. "In the winter, you



don't have any way to take your clothes off. When you go to the cafeteria, you can't carry your own tray. And what about using the toilet, how are you going to take care of that?"

Gu Mingxi couldn't answer him.

"I think you should consider your choice of school first. Consult with the school and make sure they won't reject you." When he finished speaking, Gu Guoxiang straightened up and walked out of Gu Mingxi's room.

When Li Han returned, Gu Guoxiang was sitting in the living room smoking. Their gazes crossed, their emotions fluctuating. Gu Guoxiang spoke first. He asked, "You went to the parent-teacher meeting? What did the teacher say about Mingxi?"

Li Han said lightly, "Mingxi's scores are very stable right now. If nothing happens, he'll definitely make it into a top university."

Gu Guoxiang smiled, pleased. "I just knew that Mingxi wouldn't disappoint me."

Li Han glanced at him, then walked to Gu Mingxi's room. She said, "Mingxi, your dad and I have something to talk about. For now, don't leave your room."

Gu Mingxi nodded.

In order to prevent him from eavesdropping, Li Han called Gu Guoxiang out to the balcony. She said, "Don't smoke inside the house. It smells terrible."

Gu Guoxiang and Li Han spoke for half an hour. When he heard Gu Guoxiang leaving, Gu Mingxi finally walked out of his room.

He asked his mother, "Mom, what did Dad need to talk to you about?"

Li Han's expression was very calm. She went to the kitchen to make Gu Mingxi a snack. She said, "It's nothing."

Gu Mingxi didn't believe it. He walked over to her and saw Li Han's eyes were red. Gu Mingxi said, "Mom, don't treat me like a child. If there's something that's making you unhappy, you can tell me."

Li Han was boiling water on the stove, and she turned to get the dumplings from the refrigerator. Gu Mingxi followed her, "Mom, don't think that you can't



tell me because you think it will affect my college entrance exam. Actually, if you guys hide it from me like this, then my imagination will run wild. Tell me. What did Dad say to you? Don't worry, I'm on your side."

Hearing the last sentence, Li Han's tears started to roll down her face. She lifted her head to look at Gu Mingxi, and reached out her hand to touch his face. As she sobbed, she said, "Mingxi, your dad and I decided to get divorced."

In the past few years, the Golden Compound underwent many changes. Originally, the four residential buildings there had been filled with people who worked at the metals company. But after the factory moved, a lot of people bought out the houses like Pang Shuisheng. Afterwards, they sold the house again to someone else. Adding on to that, a lot of workers had moved to the new residences in City West. Presently, the Golden Compound was filled with new settlers and unfamiliar faces.

But this place still had some employees from the metals company, like Jin Ai'hua, Zhong Xiaolian, Zhang Jiaqi's father... Soon enough, with Zhong Xiaolian's big mouth, she told a lot of people about Gu Guoxiang's affairs at work. Gu Mingxi finally found out that his father was soon to have a healthy baby. His dream finally came true.

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Gu Mingxi tried very hard not to let this information affect himself, but in the end, it still affected him. Sometimes, he and Pang Qian would both sit there, lost in thought. Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi wasn't in a good mood. After eating dinner in the cafeteria and going over some questions, she dragged him out to take a walk at the small park.

She said to Gu Mingxi, with all her years and experience, "You're already 19 years old. You're not a little kid anymore. Don't worry about your parents' divorce. Who knows, maybe after your mom leaves your dad, she'll be able to find a better man."

This method of comforting someone left Gu Mingxi unsure whether he should laugh or cry. Pang Qian kept quacking on, "Your dad's already 46 years old. If he has a baby now, by the time the baby starts nursery school, your dad will be 50 years old. When he goes to pick up the kid, everyone might think he's the kid's



grandpa.”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “You’re thinking really far in the future.”

Pang Qian pat his shoulders. “What I’m saying, Gu Mingxi, is that we can’t do anything about your parents’ divorce. You really don’t have to let their matters make you unhappy. They haven’t been fighting for a few days, they’ve been fighting for several years now. Your dad will live in his new house, and he won’t have anything to do with us. All you have to do is get into a good university, and then spend more time with your mom. Of course, if your mom gets a new boyfriend, you also have to be more generous. Don’t just oppose. Your mom’s a special person. She’s just 40-something. My (maternal) grandmother was more than 60 years old when she got married again. Your mom is a lot younger and prettier than her.”

Gu Mingxi stared at Pang Qian. He hadn’t at all expected this girl to make such comments.

She really understood a lot of things Maybe, while no one noticed, she’d already grown up.

But then Pang Qian’s next words made him laugh out loud again. She saw a food vendor in the distance and clapped her hands together. “Hey! The uncle that sells shredded radish pancakes is here! I love eating their shredded radish pancakes! I’ll go buy it. Do you want to eat any?”

Gu Mingxi smiled slightly as he shook his head. Pang Qian pulled out a dollar from her pocket, and then ran over to the vendor to join the group of primary school students waiting to buy their pancakes.

Gu Mingxi looked after her. Pang Qian’s eyes were glued to the uncle frying the pancakes. She licked her lips, and this small habit turned Gu Mingxi’s smile bigger. He really liked Pang Qian too much. Liked her good and pure nature. Liked how simple things made her happy. Liked her optimistic and positive attitude. Liked her childish temperament and how she enjoyed playing and messing around. And he liked that gentleness that would sometimes slip out.

Gu Mingxi knew that a lot of girls liked him, but he couldn’t get along with them naturally. Each of them, whether it was Xiao Yujing, Jiang Zhiya, Li Xiaoyan, Luo Xin... Whenever Gu Mingxi spoke with them, he always saw something



particular in their eyes.

They pretended not to care about his disability, but in reality, they minded. When they weren't careful, their eyes would inevitably land on his empty shirt sleeves. Sometimes he wouldn't ask for help, but they would make a move to try to help him.

Gu Mingxi knew that these concerns (both caring about and being bothered by) would follow him for the rest of his life. As the years passed, their concern would only grow more obvious. He thought, of all the people in his life, the only person who truly didn't mind was probably Pang Qian.

But sometimes, he would also suspect. Did Pang Qian really not mind?

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June 7th, 2003 was the college entrance exam. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were both extremely prepared by then.

That year, the whole country was raging with [censored]. The testing center looked like a battleground, with lots of people wearing face masks. Before people entered the testing center, they even had to get their temperature taken.

Note: The original text displays \*\* where I've written [censored], though I'm not sure why. Being 2003, I'm going to assume this is in reference to the SARS outbreak.

Wearing shorts and a t-shirt, Gu Mingxi walked into the testing center. His empty, swinging shirt sleeves were very eye-catching. Pang Qian stayed by his side until they had to split up. Then she made a fist and said, "Gu Mingxi, *jiayou!*"

Gu Mingxi smiled and nodded towards her. "Pang Pang, you too. *Jiayou.*"

Outside the window, there wasn't a single cloud in the blue sky. As the cicadas hummed their song in the trees, the bell rang in the testing center. Gu Mingxi sat at a specially prepared lowered table. He opened his test booklet and picked up his pen with his right foot.

His heart was calm. He looked at the test paper and then smiled.

These few sheets of white paper might change a person's life entirely.



*Pang Pang*, he thought, *good luck*.

Two days later, the college entrance exams concluded. Gu Guoxiang and Li Han went to the Civil Affairs Bureau and ended their more than 20 year long marriage.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 69 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 69 (Part 1) Vast and Endless Sea

*He already left.*

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When Li Han and Gu Guoxiang signed their divorce agreement, Gu Mingxi was already an adult, so they didn't have to go over custody terms. As for the division of assets, because Gu Guoxiang still worked at the metals company, he wanted to keep the house in his name. To compensate, he would buy Li Han and Gu Mingxi another house and give them 200 thousand dollars.

"I'll take care of Gu Mingxi's college tuition and living expenses as well," Gu Guoxiang said.

A lot of people tried to convince Li Han that Gu Guoxiang was very shameless, that she ought to fight until he was left struggling. She should talk about how corrupt he was, about the mistakes he made with the clients, and ruin him. At the least, she should threaten him and take him for all his worth – house, car, money. Li Han shouldn't hesitate to take it all, without leaving him even a dime.

Hearing those words, Li Han only smiled a bit.

If this was the year that Gu Guoxiang had cheated on Li Han, she might have agreed with all those things. At that time, she hated Gu Guoxiang so much. She thought of how hard she worked for their family over the years, how much she did for her son. And then to end up in this situation, she even thought about taking Gu Guoxiang to his grave along with her to hers.

But now, Li Han and Gu Guoxiang had already separated for a year and a half. Gu Guoxiang deposited \$3,000 into her account every month for living expenses. Gu Mingxi also gave her ten thousand dollars and said that Gu Guoxiang had given it to him as spending money.



There were many lonely nights where Li Han lied in bed and thought about her past with Gu Guoxiang. In other people's eyes, all that happened was Gu Guoxiang's fault. But Li Han knew that for a crack to appear between a husband and wife, it couldn't have only been one person's problem.

This was the impartial truth— Gu Guoxiang couldn't accept Gu Mingxi's disability. No matter what anyone said to him, no matter how hard Gu Mingxi worked, he couldn't accept him.

A person's mindset is very hard to change. Li Han couldn't understand Gu Guoxiang's prejudice, and Gu Guoxiang couldn't understand Li Han's persistence. He had a lot of pressure from his parents. As the years passes, having a healthy child had become an obsession for him.

Li Han recalled a day several years before. She'd gone to the hospital, and the doctor told her it would be very difficult to conceive again. That night, Gu Guoxiang spent a long time smoking on the balcony. When he came back inside, he hugged Li Han and cried.

At that time, she should have realized that their marriage was over.

The most innocent one of them all was Gu Mingxi.

Li Han knew that as Gu Mingxi grew up, he was always looking at his father's back. He'd inherited his diligence, hardworking nature, and morality from Gu Guoxiang. Although Gu Guoxiang and Gu Mingxi weren't close, in Gu Mingxi's heart, there was always a spot for his father. The reason he'd worked so hard in school, after all, was really to get his father's approval.

Li Han decided to part with Gu Guoxiang without hard feelings. She didn't want Gu Guoxiang to become something so unsightly in front of their son. There are some things, like a fig leaf, that are best left not pulled off. Everyone should just live in peace. If there were problems, they could be discussed. If you really pull it off, the other party will lose face, but you won't end up gaining anything.

Moreover, Gu Guoxiang was going to have another child soon. Li Han was a kindhearted person. Children were always innocent in these affairs. Gu Guoxiang hadn't really treated Gu Mingxi poorly. She didn't have to cause any distress to that unborn child's home.



So, she accepted Gu Guoxiang's terms.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, who'd finished the college entrance exam, were very relaxed. Especially Pang Qian. After she estimated her scores, she couldn't believe it. She grabbed Gu Mingxi and shouted out, "Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi, I think I did really well!"

Seeing her so happy, Gu Mingxi was also happy. He asked her what her estimated score was, and Pang Qian grew embarrassed. She shook her head rapidly. "Not telling you. I probably remembered some of my answers wrong. How could I score that high. Aiya, we'll know when the results are out."

Gu Mingxi didn't ask her again. After all, the scores you estimate yourself aren't entirely accurate. They could only choose their schools when the results came out anyway, so he wasn't in a rush.

While they waited for their results to come out, Gu Mingxi brought Pang Qian over to Shark's place to play. Because of [censored; SARS outbreak?], the barbecue place didn't have much business for several months. Clam and Oyster went to work at a nearby small factory, and Shark just took the time to rest at home.

That evening, Clam and Oyster returned from work. They were still living with Shark. When they saw Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, they were both very happy. All of them had dinner together. Shark asked Gu Mingxi what university he intended to go to.

Gu Mingxi was silent. After his father spoke to him a few months prior, he and his mother discussed things a bit and then told Teacher Dai about it. Teacher Dai also thought it was problematic. She had Gu Mingxi give her a list of schools he was interested in, and she would contact their recruiters.

Looking at scores and honors, Gu Mingxi was undoubtedly a good student. But after finding out about his disability, many schools replied that they'd have to wait for the exam results to come out before making any decisions.

So at this time, Gu Mingxi was a bit scared.

When he and Pang Qian left Shark's place, Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, let's go for a walk before we head home, okay?"



Pang Qian nodded. The two of them walked along the street leisurely, and Pang Qian chattered about her friends' plans. "Zheng Qiaoqiao decided to pick E University for foreign language. Her score should be enough. Sun Mingfang called me and said she did okay on the exam, and she should be able to get into a tier-2 school. But she doesn't want to go far away, so she'll probably just choose a better tier-3 school here. A few days ago, I went shopping with Wang Tingting, and she didn't test well. She'll probably only be able to get an associate's degree, but she's not going to try the test again. Sun Mingfang said that Hu Tianli didn't do well, and if his score isn't enough to get into a tier-3, he'll take the exam again next year. And there's also Zhang Wei..."

Gu Mingxi smiled as he listened to her, without interrupting. Pang Qian suddenly stopped talking. She turned her head up to look at the early summer sky. She let out a long sigh and said, "Ah... Finally free."

She turned her head and smiled at Gu Mingxi. She said, "Gu Mingxi, in two more months, we'll be able to go to Shanghai together."

Gu Mingxi asked, "Did you decided which school you'll choose?"

"Yeah."

"Which one?"

Pang Qian stuck out her tongue, and then said, "When all the results come out, I'll tell you."

Gu Mingxi smiled. "Shanghai's really big, a lot bigger than E City. You'd better make sure not to pick a place across the city from me, so that we're in two different corners of Shanghai."

Pang Qian shook her head, "I wont."

He looked deeply at her, and called softly, "Pang Pang."

"Mm?"

Seeing her delicate and rosy cheeks, and her pure eyes, Gu Mingxi grew silent. He'd drunken some alcohol at Shark's place so his face was burning slightly. He suddenly wanted to kiss her, but he also thought it might scare her.

They never brought up that kiss from a year ago. Gu Mingxi's Adam's apple



bobbed. Somewhat hoarse, he said, “Nothing. I just wanted to call you.”

He thought, there was still a lot of time in the future.

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When he got home, Li Han was watching TV. Gu Mingxi called out a greeting to her. After he washed his feet, he was about to head back to his room when Li Han stopped him.

These days, Li Han always seemed preoccupied and not very communicative. Gu Mingxi knew that she had a lot on her mind. When he thought about how she and his father had just gotten divorced, she wouldn't have been feeling well, so he didn't ask her much.

Li Han called Gu Mingxi over to sit at the dinner table. She said, “Mingxi, there's something I want to talk to you about.”

Gu Mingxi hadn't expected that Li Han wanted to talk to him about choosing a university.

“I know that you want to get into Shanghai's University of Finance and Economics, but right now, that school hasn't responded back to us.” Li Han sat in front of Gu Mingxi and looked at her son. “I wanted to talk to you about this. Teacher Dai called me today and said that Z City's B University gave a response. As long as your scores qualify you, they won't reject you based on your physical condition.”

“B University?” Gu Mingxi thought it was strange. “I never mentioned B University to Teacher Dai.”

Li Han said, “I brought it up to her. I asked her to get in touch with the recruiter for B University. You can be sort of considered a kid from Z City. If you study at B University, then I can rent a place nearby. I can be there for you the whole time, and it won't be a burden for the school.”

Gu Mingxi didn't respond.

Z City was a small town in the north. It was Li Han's hometown. It's where she grew up and studied through secondary school, when she got a job at Z City's office for E City's metal company. After working there for two years, she was sent over to the main branch.



B University was a 211 Project school and was pretty well-known throughout the northern regions. It was considered a top university in the nation. All the schools that Gu Mingxi had reported to Teacher Dai were located in Shanghai. He hadn't expected that Li Han would add on B University.

Gu Mingxi was a very smart person. He immediately figured out Li Han's intentions. He asked, "Mom, do you miss your home?"

Li Han pressed her temples with her hand. She nodded. Sounding exhausted, she said, "Your dad said he wanted to buy us a house here. I told him not to buy one just yet. Son, you've grown up. There are some things I can't decide on my own, and I want your opinion about it. I'll tell you what I'm thinking first. You know that I'm not someone from this area. After being here for twenty years, I still only have a handful of friends. All my relatives and classmates are back in my hometown. You'll be starting school soon. If you go to Shanghai, then I'll be left alone in this city. Even if I have a house here, so what?"

She cried and the tears slowly flowed down her face. "Your grandparents are getting older too. I've been away from them for more than twenty years now, and it makes me feel very guilty for being unfilial. Now, I've already gotten divorced. I've filed for early retirement. When you go to college, I really won't have anything to worry about. So I thought it was better for your dad not to buy a house and just give us the money. We can go back to my hometown, buy a house there, and stay with your grandparents for a few years."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Li Han looked at him. "The only thing I can't give up is you, Mingxi, so I secretly told Teacher Dai about B University. I was just taking a chance. I really didn't expect that none of the schools in Shanghai would respond, but B University would so readily accept you. So I wanted to discuss it with you. Can you consider going to school at B University?"

Gu Mingxi was silent for a moment, and then he said, "Mom, I promised that I'd study together with Pang Qian in Shanghai. Actually, if you'll worry about me, you can come along to Shanghai too. We can rent a place at the school."

Li Han shook her head and forced a smile on. "Then what happens after those four years? Will you stay in Shanghai to work or will you return to E City with



Qian Qian? If Qian Qian came back, you'd follow her, wouldn't you?"

Gu Mingxi was seen right through by his mother, and his face reddened.

Li Han said, "Mingxi, to tell you the truth, I really don't want to stay in this city. If you're sure that you'll stay in Shanghai, then I'll go with you. But..."

She shook her head, hair sweeping to the side. "You're my son. I understand you all too well. You'll definitely come back here with Qian Qian. But have you ever thought about the point behind it all? Qian Qian's feelings for you, I really don't see any hint of interest towards you. She treats you like her older brother, like a good friend. You two have grown up together all these years. You want her to change her feelings for you after you get into college, for her to like you? I'm not trying to put you down, son, but it really isn't possible!"

"Mom!" Gu Mingxi cried out. He pushed his voice back down as he said, "I just want to be together with her."

There were some things he couldn't say out loud: Mom, you don't know. It's already a little different between Pang Qian and me. She even promised me that there were some things we'd talk about again when we got into college.

Li Han let out a sigh. "Son, you're just wasting your time with this. Even if you go to the same university as Qian Qian, so what? If she wants to get a boyfriend and date, will you be able to stop her? Qian Qian was young before, so she liked to stick to you. In junior high and high school, your perspectives are still small. When she gets to college, she'll meet boys from all over the country with different kinds of personalities. Some of them might be extraordinary. Everyone likes those who are outstanding. I know that you're also exceptional, but I've told you before. In other people's eyes, you are severely disabled. You have to keep your pride, but you also have to be self-aware. I'm not saying that you're not good enough for Qian Qian. On the contrary, I think Qian Qian's not good enough for you. What I mean is that, when you're making decisions, you can't just decide based on what Pang Qian decides. You have to think about yourself more. This isn't being selfish, it's taking responsibility for yourself and your future."

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at his mother, his teeth clenched tightly. He was trembling slightly as he said, "Mom, Pang Qian has never minded that I



don't have arms. I am being responsible for myself when I make my decisions. The reason I want to get into SHUFE is for my future. Wanting to be together with Pang Qian isn't a waste of time, it's... I want to date Pang Qian. I even want to marry her. I don't think this is some kind of daydream. And I don't think that Pang Qian has no interest in me at all."

Li Han looked into Gu Mingxi's eyes. After a long while, she stood up and let out a sigh. "It's true that you forget the mother when you find a wife. But it's not even known whether or not this wife even has you in her heart. Whatever you'd like then. Go on to Shanghai. By yourself. In any case, I've decided to return to Z City."

These were words spoken in a moment of irritation.

Actually, Gu Mingxi understood Li Han's intent, and he knew his mother was just watching out for his own well-being. B University was also a top school after all. It wasn't any less renowned than SHUFE. And most importantly, B University had agreed not to reject him. And Z City was Li Han's home. If they returned there, they'd be taken care of. It was, all in all, a pretty good option for Gu Mingxi.

But how could this young man let go of the person in his heart? He followed Li Han and asked anxiously, "Mom, trust me. When Pang Qian and I get to college, we'll be together."

"How can I believe that?" Li Han suddenly turned back to stare at him. "Should I wait for your acceptance to be rescinded from SHUFE and then for you to be rejected by Pang Qian?!"

"No..."

"Then prove it to me!" Li Han turned her chin up to glare at Gu Mingxi. "The college entrance exams have already ended, son. Prove it for me to see. Go ask Pang Qian. Ask her if she likes you or not! As long as she says she likes you and will date you, I'll let you two go to Shanghai!"

Gu Mingxi looked at her unflinchingly. After a moment, he nodded. "Okay, Mom. I'll prove it for you to see."



The day that the exam results would be released, Pang Qian waited in Gu Mingxi's room, up until 12 midnight. Once it hit 12 o'clock, the two of them split up. Pang Qian went to the living room to make the call, while Gu Mingxi checked online.

Several minutes later, Pang Qian bounded happily into his room. "Hey, Gu Mingxi! You did awesome! 641 points!"

Gu Mingxi had just put his feet down from the keyboard. He got up and walked to Pang Qian. "You did really well too, 572. It's definitely past the minimum for a tier-1!"

The two of them looked at each other excitedly. Pang Qian had a strong desire to jump up and give Gu Mingxi a high-five. After a melancholic moment, she didn't care, and just directly pounced on him and gave him a hug.

"Oh my god, Gu Mingxi! I'm not dreaming, right?! I actually scored that many points?!"

She held onto him tightly as she jumped around. When she turned her head to look up at him, all she saw were his dark eyes. Gu Mingxi suddenly lowered his head and kissed her on her forehead. Pang Qian grew still and then let go of him. Then she touched her forehead and said, "Gu Mingxi, what are you doing?!"

"I..." He looked at her silently, and then smiled. He said, "I was just being happy for you."

Pang Qian pouted and stared at him. She said, "I have to get home. They're releasing the minimum scores (to get into a school) tomorrow. We'll decide then how to fill out our applications."

When the minimum scores came out, Pang Qian became Class 7's black horse. She scored 60 points higher than the minimum for a tier-1. She'd never gotten such a good score before.

A lot of people said she made a surprise play and that her luck was really good. Only Gu Mingxi knew that Pang Qian had put in great efforts for that score. This year, she'd improved after every practice exam. She spent all her efforts on the college entrance exam. Being in a good state of mind helped too. That's how she was able to get this result, it was inevitable.



Gu Mingxi even felt that if Pang Qian had another half year of time, she'd probably be able to score more than 600 points.

He'd never confessed to Pang Qian before. He'd tried to feel it out before, but he never got a good response. Gu Mingxi suddenly felt that he wasn't very bold at all. Wasn't it just saying the words, "I like you." Why did it feel harder than solving a math Olympiad question?

Two days after the score minimums were released, everyone would have to choose what school they wanted to go to. Teacher Dai sent Gu Mingxi's scores over to the recruitment office at SHUFE, but they never got a response. While Gu Mingxi waited anxiously for a response, he was also trying to find a good chance to talk to Pang Qian.

The day before they filled out the forms, Gu Mingxi gathered up his courage and went over to Apt. 501. Jin Ai'hua opened the door for him. Gu Mingxi asked if Pang Qian was home, and Jin Ai'hua said that she'd gone to her grandmother's house to play.

Gu Mingxi thanked her, and just as he was about to leave, Jin Ai'hua stopped him. She asked, "Mingxi, Qian Qian told me that you and her decided to study in Shanghai together?"

Gu Mingxi hesitated for a moment, and then nodded, "Mm."

"Mingxi..." Jin Ai'hua held onto the door and continued hesitantly. "There are some things I've wanted to tell you for awhile. You and Pang Qian are both grown up. She's an 18 year old girl now. The two of you always hanging around each other will cause others to gossip. I'm not opposing the two of you going to Shanghai together, but when that time comes, you should still act appropriately. You can't just stick to Pang Qian all the time. Otherwise, others will mistaken you for her boyfriend, and that wouldn't be good. You're a smart boy. You understand what I'm saying, right?"

Gu Mingxi quietly slipped back into his house. He sat down at his desk and zoned out. There were two graduation photos sitting on his desk. One was a group photo of the Year 3 Class 1 students, and the other was of the students who'd been in Class 2 their first year, before getting split up. When they were taking photos, Teacher Dai gathered all the students who'd been in her class that



first year. Pang Qian had arrived late and directly slipped into the first row, smiling happily for the photo.

Gu Mingxi stood in the back row, in the middle of a group of boys. He wore a white shirt, and with a large group of students in front of him, he didn't look so different (lit. special).

His right foot was resting on his desk, and he picked up the photo to look at it carefully. He thought of his mother's words, and then he thought of what Jin Ai'hua had just told him. Gu Mingxi felt a bit depressed. He couldn't help feeling dissatisfied. He looked up at his bookshelf, and then an idea popped into his head.

When Jin Ai'hua opened the door, she realized it was Gu Mingxi again. But this time, his head was tilted to the side, a picture frame held between his head and shoulder.

It was a glimmering crystal frame, and it looked very high-class.

Jin Ai'hua helped take the frame from him. Gu Mingxi said, "Auntie, please help me give the frame to Pang Qian. She asked me for it the other day, saying it was for her to put her graduation photo in."

Jin Ai'hua looked down to inspect the frame in her hands. There was only a piece of cardboard behind the glass, no photo. She nodded. "Okay, thank you."

Pang Qian returned home from her grandmother's after dinner. Jin Ai'hua delivered the frame to her. "Mingxi gave it to you."

Pang Qian looked at it. "Ah? Why did he give this to me?"

"He said you asked for it."

"When did I ask for it? I just said it looked nice a long time ago." Pang Qian curled her lips, and then left the frame on the table.

At 7 o'clock, their home phone rang. Pang Shuisheng called Pang Qian over to get the phone. She picked it up. "Gu Mingxi, are you crazy? You're right next door and you're calling?"

Gu Mingxi asked, "Did you get the picture frame?"

"Yeah."



“Try putting in your graduation photo. See if it fits or not.”

“Ah?”

“Can you try putting your photo in now?”

“Oh...”

His tone was very serious. “Just agree. Go do it now.”

Pang Qian thought it was strange, but she just agreed.

He laughed. “Mm, I’ll be waiting for your news.”

After he hung up, Pang Qian went back to her room and turned the frame to the back. She didn’t expect there to be such a sharp bit on the back. Pang Qian scratched the back slightly, and then blood flowed out from her fingertip.

“It hurts.” She sucked on her finger, and then the phone rang again from the living room. Pang Shuisheng called, “Pang Pang, phone!”

Pang Qian stormed out of her room and picked up the phone, shouting, “Gu Mingxi, you’re so annoying! My finger...”

“It’s me.” Another boy’s voice sounded from the phone. “Crab, are you free tonight? Do you want to come out for a game?”

Gu Mingxi stood out on the balcony and watched Pang Qian leave the building and head to the bike storage. A smile slipped onto his face and he immediately went out the door.

– My Mister Ostrich –



## Chapter 69 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Part 2. Love Letter from That Year 69 (Part 2) Vast and Endless Sea

*He already left.*

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He was in a very jovial mood, and he leapt down the stairs. He waved down a taxi and headed to the small park near First High. It was the start of summer, and not yet 8 o'clock, so there were quite a few people at the park. Elderly folks exercising, kids playing around, couples out for a walk... Gu Mingxi walked over to the long bench that he and Pang Qian always sat at, and he sat down. He felt a bit nervous, and then he he stood up again.

He thought, Pang Qian would need some more time since she was biking over. Maybe she'd be there in ten minutes.

But after ten minutes, she still hadn't shown up.

Twenty minutes later, thirty minutes later, and she still hadn't come.

As the people in the park dispersed, Gu Mingxi started to worry. He walked out of the park and found a convenient store with a phone and called Pang Qian's house. When the shopkeeper saw his empty, swaying sleeves, he offered to help dial the number. Then he put the receiver between Gu Mingxi's face and shoulder.

Jin Ai'hua picked up the phone. She said that Pang Qian had gone out, to play with some classmates.

Gu Mingxi was stunned and then asked, "Auntie, did she open the picture frame?"

"Yeah. When you called her, she went to open it."

Gu Mingxi, "..."



He returned to the small park, and continued waiting on the park bench.

The minutes ticked by, and the sky grew darker. There were no other people in the park. Gu Mingxi realized that no one would show up that night. But he wasn't willing to let go. So he just stubbornly sat there.

That small park held a lot of memories for him and Pang Qian. Countless sunsets, sitting side by side on that bench. Licking the fingers on her left hand as she lifted the cone in her right hand up to his mouth.

He'd even tutored her there before. At the time, they weren't in the same class, and they weren't neighbors. Gu Mingxi could only spend some time after school, in this park, to explain things to her.

He waited for a long time, and his legs had been bitten by mosquitoes several times. But he didn't care. He sat there like a statue, looking up at the night sky.

The sky was covered with clouds, and not a single star nor the moon could be seen. It was really hot that night, without even the slightest breeze. The air was thick and damp. Sometime past 10 o'clock, the clouds couldn't hold the water vapor any longer, and beads of water started to fall from the sky. They dropped onto the trees and also onto Gu Mingxi's head, soaking through his clothes.

Suddenly, rain started pouring across the entire city.

All the cars on the street turned on their lights. Bike riders and pedestrians all straddled their heads with their hands to block the rain. The long awaited rain dissipated the heat of the summer, and the temperature dropped. The sound of the falling rain blocked out many other sounds.

No one knew that in a small park inside this city, there was a 19 year old boy standing alone under the heavy rain. He was soaked to the skin and shivering. The rain blurred his vision and streamed down his face, mixing with another clear liquid.

For the first time in his life, Gu Mingxi didn't hold back his emotions. On this empty night, he stood under the falling rain and let himself cry until he was content.

At 11 o'clock, Gu Mingxi returned to the Golden Compound soaking wet. He went to the bike storage and saw Pang Qian's bike. He stood in front of her bike,



a small briefly appearing on his face, before he turned around and walked up the stairs.

Students chose their university and major from June 26th to 28th. Gu Mingxi and Li Han waited for news from SHUFE, but in the end, the recruiter called Teacher Dai and said there was no way to guarantee admission for Gu Mingxi. He could fill in the school as his choice, but it was possible he would be rejected.

Hearing this news, Gu Mingxi thought it over for an hour, and then said to Li Han, “Mom, I decided to choose B University.”

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Pang Qian had tossed that frame into a drawer because she’d pricked her hand on it. But it was also because she didn’t usually put up photos. In any case, Pang Qian entirely forgot about this matter.

After she handed in her university choice form to Teacher Zhong, she ran up to the fourth floor to find Gu Mingxi. Gu Mingxi and Zhou Nanzhong had stepped out to the bathroom. When Xie Yi saw Pang Qian, he slipped out to talk to her.

“Hey, did you tell him which school you picked?” Xie Yi folded his arms in front of him and leaned against the door frame. He smiled happily. “If he finds out you picked SHUFE, he’ll be happy to death.”

Pang Qian blushes. “I might not be able to get in though. I looked up the admittance scores from previous years, and they’re always something like 50 points above the minimum for tier-1 schools. If I can’t get in, I guess I’ll have to change my major. I picked a pretty popular one.”

Xie Yi asked, “What did you fill out?”

“Financial engineering.”

“You’ll probably have to switch.”

“I know!” Pang Qian grabbed her cheeks and said a bit vexed, “I just filled it like that because my brain was momentarily in a fever. Later on, if I get dropped into a really unpopular major, I’m going to be doomed.”

“It’s not for sure. See how your luck goes.” Xie Yi smiled to comfort her.

That’s when Gu Mingxi and Zhou Nanzhong returned. When he saw Pang Qian



and Xie Yi chatting and smiling happily, his eyes immediately dimmed. Pang Qian turned around and saw him, “Gu Mingxi, did you fill out your school?”

“Yeah,” he responded.

“Where did you pick?”

“B University.”

Xie Yi and Pang Qian were both stunned.

Pang Qian asked, incredulous, “B University?”

“Wait, wait, wait, where’s B University?” She turned back to Xie Yi. Her voice hopeful, she asked, “Is B University in Shanghai?”

Xie Yi shook his head. “No, it’s in Z City.”

“Z City? Up north?” Pang Qian turned back to Gu Mingxi, eyes wide. “Gu Mingxi, did you already turn in your form? What kind of joke are you playing? Are you tricking me? You...”

“I don’t have arms, so SHUFE wouldn’t want me.” He said this sentence very lightly. Pang Qian’s face paled. He said, “I’m not tricking you, Pang Pang. No matter who I trick, I wouldn’t trick you.”

Although he said that, Pang Qian was angry. She was so angry that she ignored him and sat in her room for several nights crying. She was angry that Gu Mingxi hadn’t even mentioned anything about choosing B University to her. B University was so far away, so she’d never even considered choosing it. When she told her parents that she wanted to change her application, she was directly rejected.

Jin Ai’hua said, “Z City’s so cold. A tender girl like you from the south wouldn’t eat well there or live well there. And work will be so hard to find in the future!”

Pang Qian was depressed for several days, and then she gradually thought things through. She located Z City on the map. The distance between Z City and E City and Shanghai was really great. She thought, she’ll have to start saving money so that she could visit Gu Mingxi. She also thought that he’d return home during winter and summer breaks as well. It was just four years, or three and a half if you leave out the internship. After three and a half years, she’d be able to see Gu Mingxi again. Thinking of this, she felt much better.



Pang Qian was an optimist. She wouldn't be afraid of cower because of this separation. She wrapped her arms around her knees and sat in bed. There were still two more months. It was still enough time. There were some things that she had to tell Gu Mingxi before school started.

Choose a suitable time. What about his 19th birthday? It would be Qixi as well. How romantic would that be. Or maybe her 18th birthday. She'd become an adult, so that was also a meaningful day.

But that day didn't come for her. After filling out their applications, Pang Qian had ignored Gu Mingxi. But when she made a move to find him, Gu Mingxi hid from her.

After getting the cold shoulder from him, Pang Qian couldn't help but get angry. That time happened to coincide with Jin Ai'hua's annual vacation time, so mother and daughter joined a tour group to Qingdao, Penghai, and Jinan to play for a few days.

Pang Qian even brought back a present for Gu Mingxi. A large conch. When you put it next to your ear, you could hear the sound of the sea.

When she and Jin Ai'hua returned, it was already the middle of the night. Nothing seemed strange about Apt. 502, so Pang Qian washed up and then slipped into dreamland.

-----

When Xiao Yujing went to school to find Teacher Dai, they had a chat. Xiao Yujing got into Peking University. She sat down next to Teacher Dai, swinging her legs and eating grapes. Teacher Dai said, "It's really a shame about Gu Mingxi. Such a good score, but he can only get into B University. And he had to choose computer science as his major."

Xiao Yujing had already heard about this. She asked, "He can't choose a different major?"

"No. The teacher at B University said that because he doesn't have arms, computer science would be the most suitable. Gu Mingxi didn't really seem to like it, but there was no other choice. When it comes to choosing a school, he's at the disadvantage."



“He always wanted to go to Shanghai,” Xiao Yujing said. “He told me a long time ago. He wanted to go to Shanghai, to study at SHUFE.”

“Mm. Who would have thought that in the end, it was Pang Qian who ended up at SHUFE.” Teacher Dai let out a sigh. “Pang Qian really worked hard last year. Her scores were better than a lot of students in our class.”

“Gu Mingxi had a lot to do with that,” Xiao Yujing said with a smile. “But it really is a shame that the two of them won’t be able to go to the same school.”

Teacher Dai nodded. “Yes. Oh yeah, did you know that Gu Mingxi’s train to Z City leaves today?”

Xiao Yujing asked surprised, “Today?” It’s only the start of July. Why’s he going there?”

“They said they already packed up and sent everything over a few days ago. Since his parents got divorced, he’s following his mom back to her hometown. School starts in September, and they want some time to settle down. Everything’s already dealt with on this side, so once they have their tickets, they can go.”

Xiao Yujing asked, “He’s not coming back?”

“Probably not.”

“What about their house here?”

“They seemed to be renting it.”

“Teacher Dai, do you know what time his train leaves at?”

“He told me, but I don’t really remember. 10 or 11 in the morning?” Teacher Dai let out another sigh. “He told me not to tell anyone in advance, that he didn’t want anyone to send him off. It... didn’t even seem like he told Pang Qian.”

Xiao Yujing looked to the wall clock. It was already 9:10. There was no time to delay. She reached over the table and made a phone call.

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“Xie Yi, do you have Pang Qian’s home phone? Hurry and call her and tell her that Gu Mingxi’s heading to Z City today, on the 10 or 11 o’clock train this



morning. He's not just going there to study, he's moving there! After he leaves, he's not coming back! Hurry and tell Pang Qian to get to the train station!"

After she hung up, Xiao Yujing ignored Teacher Dai's surprised gaze and grabbed her bike keys before charging out the door.

She'd never ridden her bike that fast before. She didn't even pay attention to the red lights, riding all the way to the train station. She parked her bike and then ran to the train station waiting area.

She was a very methodical person. First, she checked with the information desk about when the next train to Z City would be. Then she checked the notice board to confirm the waiting area.

On the other side of things, Xie Yi, who'd been sleeping in, was woken up by Xiao Yujing's call. He immediately called Pang Qian's house, but the line was busy.

Xie Yi didn't even bother washing his face or brushing his teeth. He just pulled on some clothes and ran out the house. The driver had already gone out, so he grabbed his hair and then ran to his bike to head over to Pang Qian's.

His house wasn't that far from Pang Qian's. Xie Yi pretty much "flew" all the way to the Golden Compound. He didn't know which building or floor Pang Qian lived in, so he could only stand outside and call out, "Pang Qian! Pang Qian! Pang Qian—"

An unkempt head popped out onto Pang Qian's balcony. "Xie Yi? What are you doing? I'm trying to sleep."

Xie Yi shouted up to her, "Hurry and get down here! I'll give you one minute!"

Xie Yi's bike was a sports bike so he couldn't carry anyone on it. He dragged Pang Qian's arm until they reached the street. After waving his hand for a long time, they finally got a taxi.

To the train station.

Xiao Yujing arrived breathless at the waiting room. She trotted around the room until she spotted that unusual figure. Xiao Yujing was covered in sweat. She ran over in front of Gu Mingxi and saw a very exhausted Li Han beside him.



Panting for breath, there was a lot of things she wanted to say to him. But seeing him there now, she suddenly couldn't say any of it.

Gu Mingxi stood up and slightly smiled at her. "I hadn't expected that there would be someone to send me off."

Xiao Yujing asked a question that she already knew the answer to. "Will you come back?"

Gu Mingxi thought for a bit, and then said, "I don't know, but probably not."

"There's still twenty minutes. Pang Qian will be here soon."

Gu Mingxi's gaze turned cold. "You told her?"

Xiao Yujing nodded. "It's not right of you to not tell her. Really, Gu Mingxi, it's not right."

"I had my own considerations," he said lightly. "If I told her, she'd come to send me off. And she'd definitely cry."

"Then let her cry!"

"I'll feel terrible seeing her cry," he said, once again lightly. "There's no future between her and me, so I don't want to make her cry."

"Who said you two don't have a future?" Xiao Yujing said. "Pang Qian chose SHUFE, don't you know?"

"I know, but that doesn't really mean anything," Gu Mingxi said. He shrugged his shoulders. "I can't give up the rest of my life for her. I might get rejected from SHUFE."

Xiao Yujing clenched her teeth. "You're lying."

He looked at her, and then suddenly smiled. "Xiao Yujing, you don't understand me."

Xiao Yujing's expression slowly returned to normal. She also smiled for a moment. "You're right, I don't understand you."

When she finished speaking, she suddenly spread open her arms and hugged Gu Mingxi. She closed her eyes, hands clasped tightly behind his back, her face up against his chest, hearing his heart beat. She said, "Maybe we'll never meet



again, Gu Mingxi. I wish you good fortune.”

She released her hold and looked up at him, tears beading around her eyes. “Make sure you remember the words you said during our military training. Mister Ostrich, I’m sure that you’ll become an amazing person.”

An announcement sounded for train boarding. Li Han stood up and said, “Mingxi, we have to go.”

Gu Mingxi lowered his head to look at Xiao Yujing. “I have to go.”

Xiao Yujing reached out a fist and knocked on his chest. “Mm. *Jiayou*, and have a good journey.”

By the time Xie Yi dragged Pang Qian into the train station, the train had already left.

Xiao Yujing was sitting on the steps in front of the train station, her chin in her hands. Xie Yi walked up to her, out of breath. And Pang Qian charged straight into the train station.

Xiao Yujing stood up and called to her, “He already left.”

Pang Qian turned around to look at her, hair disheveled. Just like Xie Yi, she hadn’t washed her face or brushed her teeth. She was even wearing slippers on her feet.

“Left?” Pang Qian stared at her, and then turned to grab Xie Yi. “Get up. You promised me that we’d make it in time.”

Xie Yi slumped down on the ground. “What am I supposed to do about there being traffic?! And your mom was the one who was on the phone all morning.”

Pang Qian turned back to look at the train station. She limped over and muttered to herself, “What is he doing? Why didn’t he say anything to me? What’s this supposed to mean?”

Her voice was choke with sobs. Xie Yi finally stood up, about to grab her, when Xiao Yujing stopped him. She shook her head. “Forget it. Let her cry for awhile.”

Pang Qian couldn’t stop herself. Standing in front of the train station entrance, with people walking in and out, she started to wail out loud.



That summer, several things happened.

First, Pang Qian received an acceptance letter to SHUFE. She didn't get into financial engineering, but rather was put into the financial investments major.

Second, Pang Qian had her 18th birthday, and she was an adult now.

Third, Shark sold his barbecue shop and decided to go to Shanghai to start a business.

Fourth, Xie Yi gave up on studying in China. Instead, with his impressive exam scores, he applied to schools in America.

Fifth, Gu Guoxiang got married. He had a wedding banquet and invited Pang Shuisheng's family and Pang Qian's grandparents. But none of them attended.

Sixth, in the vast and endless sea of people, Pang Qian lost her Gu Mingxi.

[End of Part 2]

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 70

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands 70 The Classic

*When the sun shines on the sea, I miss you. When the dim moonlight shines on the spring, I miss you.*

---

<My Miss Crab>

Miss Crab is an interesting girl.

When Mister Ostrich was still a small ostrich, he already knew Miss Crab. Of course, at the time, she was also just a little crab.

The little crab loved to eat and sleep. With a plump, round face and a plump, round body, she didn't have the smartest brain. She did all the childish things that a childish kid would do. After being scolded very badly, she cried. But after she realized that her tears were useless, she would wipe them away and start to act cute towards the adults.

On this point, Little Crab definitely wasn't dumb.

She was just a bit innocent.

Little Ostrich played together with Little Crab ever since he was very small. At that time, they didn't know what the world outside was like. They were very happy and carefree. Even if they fought sometimes, they would make up really quickly.

That wonderful life came to an end the summer that Little Ostrich turned 6 years old. He had a serious illness.

The sick Little Ostrich felt very scared, unsure of what the outcome would be in the end. Would the cowardly Little Crab no longer agree to play with him?



Little Ostrich won't ever forget the moment that he realized the rest of his life would no longer be the same, and then he saw Little Crab's eyes.

Little Crab didn't cry out of fear, nor did she try to hide. She just gave a gentle look towards Little Ostrich and curled her lips without making a sound.

When she realized that Little Ostrich was crying, she reached out her little plump hand and helped him wipe away his tears. And then she smiled.

Little Crab loved to eat sweets. Several of her teeth had cavities, but she didn't care. She just smiled mischievously with a mouth full of rotten teeth.

That year, Little Crab was just 5 years old.

...

The 19 year old Mister Ostrich wrote a letter to the 18 year old Miss Crab.

He stuffed it into a pretty picture frame. He gave the frame to Miss Crab and told her to immediately put a photo inside. And Miss Crab agreed to.

Mister Ostrich thought, she'd definitely see that letter.

Actually, Mister Ostrich wasn't a cowardly person. He'd already expressed himself and left implications many times. Although he was uncertain whether Miss Crab was pretending to be a fool or if she was truly that slow, in any case, Miss Crab's response left Mister Ostrich very confused.

Mister Ostrich could never understand Miss Crab's intentions. But they were grown up now, and the cruel reality was that they would probably be separated. Mister Ostrich wrote that letter to Miss Crab as a last chance for himself. Miss Crab was ever the romanticist, so Mister Ostrich used a very romantic gesture to express his feelings to her.

He thought that as long as she showed even a sliver of a response, he wouldn't be afraid of anything, and he would continue to stay by her side.

Mister Ostrich went to a small park, where the two of them often played together, and he waited under that London planetree. Mister Ostrich's heart beat rapidly, his eyes stuck on that road into the park. He waited expectantly for his Miss Crab to show up in front of him.

But she never came.



That day, there was a heavy rainstorm. Mister Ostrich kept waiting. He imagined that Miss Crab couldn't find the place, or that she'd been delayed by other matters. Or even, maybe she was embarrassed, so she was hiding behind some tree, silently watching him.

Drenched in rain, Mister Ostrich waited a very, very long time, until he finally admitted that Miss Crab wouldn't show up.

His world lost all color. In that heavy storm of torrential rain, Mister Ostrich stood alone in that dark park. In that moment, he decided to let go.

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Pang Qian opened her eyes, surrounded by quiet. She fished up her phone to check the time, 7:10 AM.

She had slept in a simple hostel, but it had heating so it wasn't too cold. Pang Qian got up, walked to the window, and pulled open the curtains. She looked out at the snow-covered world and watched as the snowflakes flew through the air. She let out a sigh and made a call to the airport. She was informed that because of the blizzard, the airport was still closed. The weather condition was too poor, so no flights would be taking off.

Pang Qian immediately decided to ask for a refund.

She collected her luggage, braved the snow, and hailed down a taxi to the train station. The train station was filled with people. Pang Qian wanted to buy a sleeper ticket back to E City, but there weren't any. She asked about Shanghai. Yes, there was a soft sleeper. She immediately bought the ticket without hesitation.

Because of the snow, the train was also two hours late arriving to the station. While they were waiting, Pang Qian called Jin Ai'hua. She asked, "Mom, do you remember when we moved, I brought along a crystal picture frame? It was pretty big. The one that Gu Mingxi gave me when we graduated high school."

"Gu Mingxi?" Jin Ai'hua hadn't heard that name in a long time. She thought for a moment, and then said, "Didn't you pack up all your things? Gu Mingxi gave you a lot of stuff. Didn't you put it all into one box?"

Pang Qian was silent, and then said, "Oh, that seems about right. As long as we



didn't throw it away, that's good."

"What? Why did you suddenly mention Gu Mingxi?" Jin Ai'hua asked, "Did you find him?"

Pang Qian smiled and said, "No."

"Where are you right now? The plane still can't take off?"

"Nope. Don't you watch the weather report? There's a blizzard up north. I got my ticket refunded and bought a train ticket. We get on at 12 PM, and we'll probably be back in Shanghai tomorrow morning. And then I'll take the railcar back home. If things go smoothly, I should be home tomorrow afternoon."

Jin Ai'hua exclaimed, "So much trouble!"

Pang Qian sighed, "Yeah, there's no other way."

"Did you call Xiao Yu yet?"

"No, I'm not calling him. If he asks you, don't tell him when I'm coming home."

Jin Ai'hua chuckled. "Got it."

When she entered the sleeper car, Pang Qian was met by two men, a 40 year-old and a 20 year-old, who seemed to be on a business trip together. And there was also a young mother with a 3 or 4 year old boy. The young mother had bought the top bed and Pang Qian had the bottom. The young mother sheepishly asked Pang Qian if she wouldn't mind switching beds, and Pang Qian smiled and agreed. The young mother was about to repay Pang Qian for the difference, but she said forget it, since it was only a few dollars' difference.

And so, the two of them became friendly. The young mother warmly invited Pang Qian to sit on the bottom bunk and the two chatted.

The weather was bad, real estate was expensive, the price was raised for vegetables, kids are getting harder to raise...

Pang Qian's phone rang. She looked at it, it was her team leader, Zou Liwen.

Zou Liwen's voice was as cold as always. "How's the progress?"

Note: In her work conversations, words in italics were originally written in English.



Pang Qian answered calmly, “The DD in Shenyang is complete. I already spoke to the lawyer about it, and I’ll put out a memo when I get back.”

Zou Liwen said, “The Regulatory Commission and the stock exchange already gave their OK. Follow up with them.”

Pang Qian responded, “OK, I can check the work inbox on my BB at any time. It won’t leak. I’ll update the *agenda*, and then I’ll send it to the client.”

“Okay, good work.” Zou Liwen’s voice finally eased up a bit. “When are you getting back?”

“Can’t get back. There’s a blizzard here, so the plane’s can’t take off.”

“...” Zou Liwen asked, “Then where are you right now?”

“Aiya, the signal’s really bad—” Pang Qian pulled the phone away from her ear. Holding in her laughter, she said, “Team Leader, what did you say? Hello? Hello?! I can’t hear—”

And then she ended the call.

The young mother looked at her with admiration. “What kind of work do you do? I couldn’t understand anything you said. How amazing.”

Pang Qian laughed. “I’m just a regular worker.”

“Regular workers don’t make calls and speak English. What do DD and BB mean?”

“Oh, DD means *due diligence*, due diligence. BB is a phone, *blackberry*, blackberry. They’re just abbreviations we’re used to using.” Pang Qian looked at the young mother’s perplexed face, and then she smiled. “I’m really just a normal office worker. It’s just that my team leader likes to pretend to be cooler, so we can only pretend along with him.”

The young mother laughed. “You’re really interesting. What field do you work in?”

“I work in investment banking.”

“Investment?”

Pang Qian didn’t know how to explain it, so she just threw out some nonsense.



“Like, banks.”

The twenty-something man across from them let out a short, muffled laugh.

The young mother looked on with realization and said, “Ah, so it’s banking!”

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On the long journey, Pang Qian couldn’t help pulling out the illustrated book again. She’d already flipped through it three times, but she didn’t seem to tire of it.

The little boy saw the picture book and leaned over to look at it. The kid couldn’t read yet, but he liked the colorful pictures. He pointed at the illustration and said, “This is an ostrich.”

Pang Qian smiled. Then she pointed to the crab and said, “What’s this?”

The kid looked at her with a bit of disdain. “This is a crab! You’ve never eaten it before?”

Pang Qian was extremely amused.

The young man across from her struck up a conversation with her. He pointed to the book and asked, “Do you like this author?”

“Mister Ostrich?” Pang Qian nodded. “I do.”

“He’s really popular right now,” the man said. “He’s already put out several books. This one, My Miss Crab, is said to be semi-biographical. It’s selling especially well now.”

Pang Qian stared at him. “I’ve never heard of him before. He’s already published several illustrated books?”

“Yeah, at first, he used to post comics online. He was really popular on Tianya and Sina (websites). Later on, he published a book,” the man said. “But he’s pretty low-profile. People only know that he’s a man, but not much else.”

Pang Qian let out a sigh. “I must have been too busy with work these years. I haven’t gone to a bookstore in a long time.”

One day and night later, the train finally arrived in Shanghai. Because they were in a soft sleeper, Pang Qian didn’t really feel tired after the trip. She got off



the train and bought a ticket back to E City on the railcar. Less than two hours later, she arrived at E City's train station.

When she exited the station, she saw Yu Jialei. He smiled as he stood among the group of people waiting outside the station. He wore a fitted black coat, and with his tall stature, he looked very elite.

Pang Qian walked up to him, "Don't you have to work?"

"I skipped work. At worst, they'll just take out a day's wages." Yu Jialei took Pang Qian's luggage. "You must be tired. I'll send you home."

Pang Qian's lips twitched. Yu Jialei reached out grab her shoulders, but she slipped away from him.

"Keep your hands still, move your feet." She stared at him, and Yu Jialei smiled warmly at her. "Little Crab is really mean."

Pang Qian, "..."

Pang Qian's new house was in an area called Prosperous North, situated in the heart of E City. She lived on the 17th floor of the 28 story building. 109 sqm, north and south facing, with good lighting and a good view.

Carrying Pang Qian's bags, Yu Jialei and Pang Qian entered the house, and were welcomed in by Jin Ai'hua.

"You're back?" You could see the wrinkles in her face for how big the smile she gave Yu Jialei. "Xiao Yu, you've worked hard. You haven't had lunch yet, right? What do you want to eat? I'll make you something."

Pang Qian rolled her eyes at the side. She said, "I'm going to change."

She entered her room and quickly locked her door. She took off her jacket and then started rummaging through her things.

After searching for ten minutes, Jin Ai'hua knocked on her door. "Qian Qian, come out and watch TV with Xiao Yu. What are you doing in your room by yourself?"

"I'm changing!" Pang Qian shouted. She wiped away the sweat on her forehead, and then said to herself, "Where is it..."



And then, in a flash, she finally remembered.

Pang Qian rolled up her sleeves, and then pushed the pillows and blankets off her bed. She pushed the mattress aside somewhat. Under her mattress, there was a separator and then storage space in her bed. She finally found that hidden box.

The box was stuffed full with things, with a layer of dust on top. Pang Qian knew that there were still a lot of comics inside. She couldn't pull the box out, so she just started pulling out the items.

Very quickly, she found that picture frame.

Yu Jialei knocked on the door. "Little Crab, what are you doing?"

"Be quiet! I'm changing!" Pang Qian's heart boomed. She took out the dusty picture frame and sat down beside the table. Carefully, she opened the back.

This time, she was very careful, so as not to prick her finger. After she took off the backing, she saw that between the back and the cardboard, there was a sheet of light blue stationary.

Pang Qian pulled out the paper and opened it. After many years, she once again saw that youth's elegant writing.

There were just a few sentences, but they entered her mind very clearly.

Pang Qian recalled that year, after the college entrance exams, she was very relaxed. When she was hanging out with Gu Mingxi, they watched a new movie on his computer. It was a Korean romance movie, "The Classic."

The movie was very moving. The young Pang Qian had cried buckets. Leaning onto Gu Mingxi's shoulder, her tears wouldn't stop flowing.

There was a classic line from the movie, and Pang Qian had repeated it many times. And then, it was written into Gu Minxgi's letter. He wrote—

My Pang Pang,

When the sun shines on the sea, I miss you. When the dim moonlight shines on the spring, I miss you.

Tonight at 8, I'll be waiting for you at the Little Market.



I'm sure that you'll come.

Gu Mingxi

2003 June 25

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 71

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands 71 Reborn

*It was he who made me this way.*

---

The next morning, Pang Qian felt especially bad. She went to wash up with a pair of panda eyes, giving Pang Shuisheng quite the scare.

“What happened to you last night? You look terrible.”

“I couldn’t sleep all night.” Pang Qian’s mouth was full of toothbrush foam as she vaguely said, “I have a splitting headache.”

“Did you work overtime?” Pang Shuisheng asked, standing outside the bathroom door.

“No.” Pang Qian rinsed her mouth. After thinking for a moment, she stepped closer to Pang Shuisheng. In a quiet voice, she said, “Dad, there’s something I have to tell you. But don’t let Mom know about it for now.”

Pang Shuisheng grew anxious from her serious tone. “What is it?”

“I think I’ve found Gu Mingxi.”

Pang Shuisheng’s suddenly widened. “Really?!”

Aside from slight fatigue, Pang Qian felt pretty good. She carefully put on her makeup, and then put on a navy blue wool coat and walked out the door.

She drove to work, and as she was waiting for the elevator, she ran into Zou Liwen. Zou Liwen was more than 30 years old. He was wearing a dark suit. When he saw Pang Qian, the first thing he said was, “Didn’t you say you weren’t coming?”

“Team Leader, I took an overnight train and rushed back. I arrived home yesterday afternoon at 1 PM, so I came to work today.” Pang Qian’s face looked



aggrieved. “It’s one thing to not award me a top employee trophy, but why are you talking like I skipped work and spent the past few days playing and relaxing. Look at my dark circles.”

Zou Liwen looked over Pang Qian, then said lightly, “You look very pretty today.”

“Thank you,” Pang Qian smiled. “Team Leader, you’re super handsome too!”

This was really Pang Qian’s life, the ideal that she’d shared with Gu Mingxi more than seven years ago.

She became an *office* lady. Every day, she put on delicate makeup and wore pretty clothes. Standing on a pair of heels, she headed to work in a tall office building downtown. She bought a car, and her family moved to a bright, spacious house that was decorated in a modern style. She earned a decent salary. Sometimes she would be in a morning business meeting, and then be sent out on a business trip in the afternoon. She spent a lot of time in the air, and even going to Hong Kong had become very commonplace.

In front of others, Pang Qian was put together and beautiful, but alone in the dark of night, she put on her black-rimmed glasses and dirty clothes, sitting up at night to work overtime on her computer. Sometimes, she felt confused about it.

Perhaps her life had really changed because of certain things. Presently, there were multiple people pursuing her, and their qualifications were pretty good. But deeply rooted in her heart, there had only ever been one person.

During the morning meeting, Pang Qian’s mind wandered a bit. After the meeting, she immediately pulled out her phone and slipped into the stairwell.

She dialed a number that she’d found online. The publisher for “My Miss Crab.”

The receptionist answered the call. Pang Qian just said that she was a fan of Mister Ostrich and wanted to get in touch with his editor. The receptionist stayed calm in light of surprising matters, and helped Pang Qian connect to the phone.

No one picked up the phone, so eventually, Pang Qian hung up reluctantly. She called the receptionist again and said, “It’s really important that I contact Mister



Ostrich. Can you give me his editor's cell phone number?"

The receptionist said, "I'm sorry, we can't just give out personal numbers as we like. She's out on a business trip these few days. If you'd like, you can leave a message and I'll help you relay it."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, and then straightforwardly said, "Actually, I'm the Miss Crab from the book. I want to find Mister Ostrich. I've already lost contact with him for so many years."

The receptionist laughed. "I'm really sorry, miss. I often received calls from girls claiming to be Miss Crab."

Pang Qian got angry. "I can prove it! I know Mister Ostrich's name. Do you want me to tell you?"

"But I don't know his name." The receptionist's voice sounded very pretty, and she sounded sincere. "To be honest, I can understand your feelings. A lot of female readers call to ask about Mister Ostrich. I, myself, am very curious about him, but in the office, we only have contact with his editor. None of us know anything about his personal life."

She didn't seem like she was lying, so Pang Qian could only hang up after the call.

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She returned to her office and turned on her computer. She went onto Sina Blog and searched for Mister Ostrich's blog page. His latest post was from two years ago. Seems like he stopped using this blog a long time ago.

His posts were mostly comics. A casual drawing with a few interesting words even received lots of comments.

The previous night, Pang Qian had actually stayed up all night. She went through each and every post on Mister Ostrich's blog, but she didn't find any hint of his personal information. But who could understand his style more than Pang Qian?

This was her Gu Mingxi. From 2006 to 2008, he had been here.

Pang Qian rested her chin in her hands and zoned out. Suddenly a cold voice



pulled her back to reality. "I didn't know that you had such a child-like side to you."

Pang Qian held up her head and looked at the illustration on her computer screen. It was about a group of pink pigs. She silently X-ed out of the page. Turning to Zou Liwei, "Team Leader, are you looking for me?"

Zou Liwen glanced at her. "Come to my office, there's an E I want to talk to you about."

That evening, Pang Qian made an unprecedented call to Yu Jialei, inviting him out to dinner.

The two of them met in a private restaurant. Yu Jialei was obviously in a good mood. He took a seat and said, "Little Crab, what's up today? Inviting me for a meal?"

He looked at her face and then laughed. "You're really pretty today, but your expression is too scary. That's not good."

Pang Qian looked at Yu Jialei. She bit her lip hesitantly, and then said, "Today, Yu Jiawei gave me an E. You introduced it, right?"

"Yeah." Yu Jialei said as a matter of fact. "My friend wanted to do some business. If I don't introduce him to you, who would I introduce him to?"

Pang Qian said, "Yu Jialei, I already told you. I don't like you."

"That's because you still don't understand me." Yu Jialei poured Pang Qian a cup of tea. "Pang Qian, do you think that I'm not being serious enough?"

"No, that's not what I mean." Pang Qian waved her hand dismissively. "I know that you're very serious and genuine. That's why I've never hidden it from you that I'm looking for someone. I have to find him. Before I find him, I won't be able to date."

"Pang Qian, I'm really curious. Is there really such a person?" Yu Jialei folded his hands in front of him on the table. His hands were very pretty. Long, slender fingers, delicate joints. His index finger was tapping lightly on the table, and he was really mesmerizing.

Yu Jialei was 33 years old, who'd returned after getting his master's degree



abroad, a bank executive. He and Pang Qian met through work. Although it hadn't even been half a year, he had very seriously starting pursuing her.

Pang Qian didn't answer Yu Jialei's question, but instead asked, "Yu Jialei, what is it that you like about me?"

"Hey, are you trying to say that you'll change whatever I like about you?" He laughed. "Pang Qian, I've never had such a difficult time chasing after a woman. Especially with someone who has such suitable qualifications for marrying."

Pang Qian asked again, "I'm not joking around. I really want to know, what do you like about me?"

Yu Jiahe was actually quite unsure about this question. "You're a girl with great qualifications. Isn't it normal for me to like you?"

"Great qualifications?"

"Don't you think so?" Yu Jiahe smiled. "Although it's a bit crass, I'll tell you a bit about your strengths. First, your family background. You're from this area, your family is on good terms, your parents are healthy, your mother's retired, your father has a stable job that pays well and he'll also retire. Next, you're also very qualified. You graduated from a top university, you have a good job, you're strong and smart. And Zou Liwen told me that you're a hard worker. Although you complain about the workload sometimes, but you'll work overtime when you need to, and you're not lazy. As for money, you have a decent income, really not bad... Sorry, I've been friends with Zou Liwen for more than ten years now, so this (information) really isn't a secret. And lastly, as a person... You're 25, very young, very pretty, very interesting, very lively. When I'm with you, I'm always very happy. You might not know this, but every time I eat with you, my appetite is especially good, because when you eat, you really look like you're enjoying it. I always felt that a woman who likes to eat and can maintain their figure is the kind of person who enjoys life the most."

This long explanation really left Pang Qian a bit stupefied. So she'd already been reborn as a delicious cake on the marriage market?

But, why was it that after hearing Yu Jialei's praises, Pang Qian felt some sorrow and grief? She was silent for several minutes, and then came back to answer Yu Jialei's question from earlier.



“Yu Jialei, I’m not lying to you. There really is someone like that. This person absolutely exists. It’s not just an excuse, and I’m not just saying it for you to hear.”

Yu Jialei looked at her silently. Pang Qian smiled at him and said, “Do you want to hear about my story with him?”

“...” His eyes looked like they were concealing something, and then after a moment, he said, “Okay, tell me. I’ll listen.”

“Where should I start.” Pang Qian lowered her eyes, smiled slightly, and said, “Let’s start from your praises for me. Yu Jialei, you think that right now, I’m full of merits, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then let me tell you, it was that person, it was he who made me this way.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 72

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands 72 Lost and Found

*That's okay, I just want to see you.*

---

Pang Qian had wanted to tell Yu Jiale a heart-rending and soul-stirring love story, but after she started, she realized that her head was just full of bits and pieces of trivial things.

None of it really had anything to do with love.

Pang Qian didn't know how to explain her long history with Gu Mingxi to Yu Jiale. They were two very ordinary kids from this city. They didn't go through any major events. Though Gu Mingxi was disabled, in Pang Qian's memory, he was just like all the other boys.

She couldn't tell Yu Jiale that she and Gu Mingxi walked to school together every day carrying their backpacks. And then on the crowded bus, she was always pressed up against his chest, her arms wrapped around his waist in an ambiguous manner. Although there were many smells mixed in the bus, she could always smell his particular scent. She could even hear his heart beating in his chest. And he would usually have his head turned, looking out the window quietly.

She also couldn't tell Yu Jiale about her and Gu Mingxi going to the small park to eat snacks. 50 cent fried sticky rice cakes, 80 cent radish pancakes, 1 dollar sausages and stinky tofu, 2 dollar strawberry cones... Right now, Pang Qian's casual lunches all cost some tens of dollars. Yu Jiale was the same, so how could she explain this to him?

Even more than that, she couldn't tell Yu Jiale about all the years that she and Gu Mingxi were deskmates, doing hours of homework together. Those countless



days and nights, she sat by him. Sometimes she was good, sometimes she was naughty. He would bend over, with a pen in his right foot, patiently and meticulously going over and explaining the calculations to her.

Gu Mingxi probably didn't know this either. Sometimes, when Pang Qian was daydreaming, she would see his beautiful face and start counting his eyelashes. When he was younger, his voice was crisp and sweet. When he grew older, his voice was steady and clear. Pang Qian remembered his voice very well. In her dreams, she would hear him laugh and then say to her, "Oh, Pang Pang, it's you."

She remembered that year, how she cried tears of happiness as her phone call to him connected.

That summer, after Gu Mingxi and Li Han went back to Z City, Pang Qian pleaded with her father to ask Gu Guoxiang for Li Han's phone number. Pang Shuisheng didn't agree at first, comforting her that Gu Mingxi would contact her. But after two weeks, Gu Mingxi hadn't called. Pang Qian couldn't stop herself, and she caused a scene, crying in front of Pang Shuisheng. That's when he bit the bullet and went to find Gu Guoxiang.

Because the Pang's hadn't attended Gu Guoxiang's wedding, Gu Guoxiang had become a lot more cold towards Pang Shuisheng. He said he didn't know how to contact Li Han at her family's home. In the past few months, he hadn't received a call from Gu Mingxi.

Pang Shuisheng felt that Gu Guoxiang was just brushing him off, but he didn't feel like he should keep asking. He could only relay those words to Pang Qian.

And then, Pang Qian started going to the internet bar. She didn't know what she wanted to do. She just opened up QQ and stared at that grey rat icon. She continually left messages for him, long paragraphs of words. But "Mister Ostrich" was silent the whole time and didn't respond to a single message.

Pang Qian called Teacher Dai, but she didn't know about Gu Mingxi's whereabouts. Then she called Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song. They were Gu Mingxi's good friends in high school, but Gu Mingxi hadn't contacted them either. Pang Qian even called Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin, but the outcome was the same.



She ran over to Shark's barbecue shop on her own, and then found out that he'd sold the shop. Then she ran over to Shark's house and was informed by Shark's mother that he'd gone to Shanghai with his friends to start a business.

Pang Qian asked for Shark's phone number, and then quickly returned home.

The turning point was on Pang Qian's 18th birthday. She went downstairs to get the newspaper and found a parcel slip from the post office.

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Pang Qian grabbed the small, white slip of paper, her heart booming in her chest, and she quickly biked over to the post office to get her parcel.

She opened the package right then and there, and was surprised to find a Motorola phone box. She opened the box and there was a brand new phone inside.

Pang Qian picked up the small card next to the phone and looked at the one line written on it: Pang Pang, happy birthday.

And there was also a phone number with the area code 139.

Pang Qian simply couldn't describe her feelings at that moment. She grabbed the box, ran outside, and then found a public phone and dialed the number. The dial tone rang for what felt like a century, and then a click sounded and that young man's beautiful sounding voice asked, "Hello, who is this?"

When she heard his voice, Pang Qian's tears started streaming down. She gripped tightly onto the phone receiver, her voice thick with tears, and said, "Gu Mingxi."

After a few seconds of silence, he started to laugh. Hearing his laugh, Pang Qian could imagine what he looked like in that moment. He said into her ear, "Ah, Pang Pang, it's you."

School would be starting in just a couple weeks. Pang Qian's mind was in an uproar, and there were a ton of things she wanted to ask Gu Mingxi. She didn't know where to start, so just started questioning him. "Why didn't you call me?! It's been more than a month! How can you be like this?! You went to Z City! Why didn't you tell me?!"



Gu Mingxi didn't make a sound. Pang Qian's voice was very nasally. She slowed down, and with a sob, "Gu Mingxi, are you okay?"

"I'm good, Pang Pang. Don't worry," he said evenly. "I've been really busy recently. My mom and I just got settled down. Before, we were staying with my grandparents, and we had to sleep on the living room floor at night. During the day, my mom and I would go house hunting."

"You bought a house there?" Pang Qian felt her heart breaking. Was Gu Mingxi really going to move to Z City? He wasn't going to come back over winter and summer breaks?

He answered, "Mm, we bought a two bedroom house, a bit more than 70 sqm. We still have to decorate and furnish it, so we probably won't be able to move in until the end of the year."

Pang Qian asked, "Are you guys accustomed to it there?"

"It's okay. The summer here is much cooler than in E City."

"Are the winters really cold?"

"That's without a doubt. But the house has heating, so it won't be cold." Gu Mingxi paused. "Did you get the phone? It's my present for your 18th birthday. Sorry that I can't spend your birthday with you. Pang Pang, happy birthday."

"Thank you. I didn't get to say happy birthday to you either," Pang Qian said. "Gu Mingxi, I bought you a present too, but I couldn't get in touch with you. Give me your address, and I'll send it to you."

"..." He thought for a long time, and then said, "We'll talk about it later. Right now, my mom and I are renting a place by the school. It's a very simple place, and there's not even a mailbox. I'm worried that the mail will get lost."

Pang Qian asked, "You're not going to live in the dorms when school starts?"

"Mm, it will be too troublesome for the other students."

The two of them were both quiet for awhile. Then Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, Shanghai's a really big city. You have to make sure to take care of yourself when you're there."

Pang Qian started to cry again. With a pout, she said, "You're the one who



didn't keep your word! Even if SHUFE wouldn't take you, I don't believe that none of the other schools in Shanghai wouldn't either! Shanghai has so many top schools, and you exam score was 130 points higher than the minimum for tier-1! You couldn't have been unable to get into any of them!"

Gu Mingxi sighed. "What's the point of saying that now? Pang Pang, don't cry."

Pang Qian asked, "Are you coming back for New Year's next year?"

"Probably not."

Pang Qian suddenly wiped away her tears. "Gu Mingxi, next summer, I'll go visit you, okay?"

He was startled, "Ah?"

"Since you bought a house, I'll have a place to stay when I visit," Pang Qian said. "You said that the summers in Z City were very cool. Then I'll just go to get away from the heat for a few days. You'll have to be the host and take me out to play."

Gu Mingxi said helplessly, "Z City isn't a vacation city."

"That's okay, I just want to see you," Pang Qian said. "Gu Mingxi, I've never gone so long without seeing you! A year! I definitely have to go see you!"

Gu Mingxi was silent again. Then he said, "Pang Pang, if you still want to visit me next spring, then I'll gladly welcome you in the summer. But I hope that you can understand that some things are better left to the past. Some people you meet will only be with you for a certain part of your life, like Wang Tingting in primary school, Sun Mingfang in junior high, and even Zheng Qiaoqiao in high school. You guys were really good friends at one time, but later, you grew distance because you went to different schools. You're always moving forward. After you start SHUFE, you'll meet a lot of new people, and you'll meet some boys."

His voice carried a warm smile. "Pang Pang, when you're in college, dating isn't unusual. If there's someone that you like, you should try to see where it takes you. Maybe in a few months, you'll have a boyfriend and you won't want to see me anymore."



His words were very strange, and Pang Qian felt extremely depressed hearing them. Her mouth was faster than her brain, and she'd already started saying, "I won't! Gu Mingxi, if you like another girl, you have to be sure to tell me!"

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian's face reddened. Gu Mingxi said, "Alright, we've already talked for a long time. I'm hanging up. Pang Pang, when you get to Shanghai, set up your phone and message me your number."

"Oh."

"Then I'll hang up, bye."

"Bye." Pang Qian still couldn't bear to hang up the phone. Her eyes were red. She asked the shop boss, "How much?"

The boss glanced at their screen, "18 dollars."

A very expensive long-distance phone call, but Pang Qian didn't feel it was a waste at all as she handed the money over.

Because she'd finally found Gu Mingxi.

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At the end of August in 2003, Pang Qian went to Shanghai to register. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai'hua went with her. The K train took two and a half hours to get to Shanghai. Then they got onto a shuttle bus arranged by the school and made their way to the campus.

Seeing the school gates for the first time, Pang Qian felt a bit disappointed. SHUFE was such a renowned school, so how come it didn't look impressive at all?

Pang Qian dragged her luggage onto the campus. The school was located in the middle of the city, and the area wasn't very large. There was green grass and trees providing shade. Along the way, she saw a building that looked ancient with a very Shanghai style.

Pang Qian and her parents were very busy that day. They took care of all the admission papers. Before returning to her dorm, she insisted on going to the mobile store to set up a sim card.



She stuffed the card into her Motorola phone and turned it on. When the screen appeared, she immediately wanted to call Gu Mingxi to let him know her number in Shanghai.

But he'd actually turned off his phone.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 73

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands 70 Distance Between North and South

*Mingxi, I told you a long time ago. Qian Qian doesn't like you.*

---

In the faraway Z City, Gu Mingxi and his mother were busy setting up their new house. They went to the building supplies market and the furniture store. Li Han wanted to get the house set before Gu Mingxi started school.

Because of his body's limitations, Gu Mingxi rarely carried his phone when he went out. Most of the time, his phone was turned off, lying inside the drawer of their rental apartment.

Sometimes he would think of Pang Qian. What was she doing right now? Was she also preparing for school? Gu Mingxi had grown up in E City. He'd spent 19 years there, and now suddenly, he was here in this foreign northern city. When he imagined spending the next four years there, or even longer than that, he couldn't help feel lost.

He was a boy from the southern region, more suited to the weather and food there. He even spoke with such a warm tone. Gu Mingxi didn't dare to ask Li Han if it was possible to move back south after he graduated. He was worried she would use Pang Qian as an excuse to scold him.

When they got on the train, Li Han had told him, "Mingxi, I told you a long time ago. Qian Qian doesn't like you."

After two months in Z City, Gu Mingxi felt that life was extremely dull and boring. Especially when they had been living with his grandmother. His mother seemed like she was just depending on others.

Li Han left her home more than 20 years ago. The few times that they'd visited, they'd stayed in fancy hotels. At the time, all her family and friends saw that she



was living well in E City. Even if her son was disabled, everyone still envied her. But now, she'd gotten divorced and dragged her disabled son back to her hometown. The gazes and criticism she received were as you would expect.

Gu Mingxi's grandparents were already more than 70 years old. They weren't in the best physical condition, and they were worried about their daughter, so they naturally welcomed her return. As for Li Mu, who lived with and took care of the two elderly folk, he didn't feel the same.

Li Mu was Li Han's younger brother. He didn't have a great educational background, so he was a security guard at a building. His wife, Huang Lingli didn't work. And their son, Li Shiyu was 16 years old, about to start high school. Li Han's parents' home was rather small, with only two rooms. Li Shiyu had always slept in the living room, with a curtain to divide the space.

Many years ago, Li Mu had told Li Han that she was always away and had left him to take care of their parents, so she should give him some allowance. He wanted to sell off his parents' house and asked for some money to buy a new three bedroom home. Then Li Shiyu would be able to have his own room.

Li Han discussed it with Gu Guoxiang, but he refused. His reason was that they already sent 10 thousand dollars every year, which was enough. Their parents' property would all be handed down to him later too. Him wanting to change houses wasn't Li Han's responsibility.

Because of this, Li Mu and Li Han had quarreled for quite some time.

After she divorced and brought her son back home, she wanted to buy a house as soon as possible. Knowing that her sister had brought along some money, he wanted to ask about it again.

Li Han had 650 thousand with her, which was her divorce settlement. At the time, homes in E City were pretty cheap, with just a 5 thousand dollar down payment for one floor. It was even cheaper in Z City, one floor for 3 thousand. Li Mu cried in front of his sister, and when Li Han and Gu Mingxi slept on the floor at her parents' home, she personally saw her brother's hardship. Thinking back to how Gu Mingxi had grown up wearing name brand clothing, whereas her nephew Li Shiyu only had clothes from the market and couldn't even buy a new pair of shoes when his broke, Li Han felt terrible.



She picked out some of Gu Mingxi's more gently-worn summer clothes to give to Li Shiyu. She even said that in a few days, she'd buy a pair of new shoes and some clothes for him. In the end, she agreed to help Li Mu. He wanted to get a new house, and Li Han helped cover 80 thousand of the cost.

Actually, she'd thought it over herself. She would get old in the future. If she helped Li Mu a bit now, his family would also be able to help Gu Mingxi in the future.

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After Gu Mingxi and Li Han returned from getting building supplies and furniture, he suddenly remembered that he hadn't checked his phone in a long time. He immediately went to pull it out of the drawer.

Gu Mingxi sat on his bed and turned on his phone with his toes. A short while later, several unread messages popped onto his screen. With a pen in his mouth, Gu Mingxi bent over to click on the small phone buttons. He opened up the text messages and noticed they were from an unsaved number.

>> Gu Mingxi, why did you turn off your phone?! It's Pang Qian. This is my new number in Shanghai. Make sure to save it.

>> Turn on your phone and call me. A text is fine too.

>> Gu Mingxi, are you unable to text?

>> Why don't you turn on your phone?! Where did you run off to?!

...

>> It's late, I'm going to sleep. This is my first night at school. My dorm room is for four people. It's very clean, but there's no bathroom. My roommates are very nice. Two of them are from Shanghai, and one is from Fuzhou. We even chatted for awhile before sleeping. One of the Shanghai girls is really funny. I really like her.

>> When my parents left, I cried, but I didn't let them see. Gu Mingxi, I'm all alone in Shanghai now. I was thinking that if you were also here, that would be so great.

>> Alright, that's enough. It's time for lights out. I miss you. Goodnight.



Those were from the previous day. She'd sent more than twenty texts total. Gu Mingxi had been silently reading them all, when he finally grabbed his pen and started to send a reply.

>> Pang Pang, I'm sorry. I've been busy these past few days. I just saw your messages.

This was the first time he was sending a text. The buttons on the phone were really small, and Gu Mingxi had tried pressing them with his fingers before, but it was too much trouble. So he just used a pen to press the buttons. Now he'd learned this way of sending messages.

His phone quickly sounded in response. Pang Qian was calling. Gu Mingxi turned his head and moved the phone to his ear. He immediately heard Pang Qian's excited voice. Pang Qian happily relayed how school was going in detail. Gu Mingxi couldn't help but remind her, "This is a long distance call."

"It's okay! My dad gave me a lot of money to recharge it. Later, I'll send you the number for the dorm. When you start, send me yours too. I'll go buy an IP card (internet phone?) to call you, and then it will be cheaper!"

Just when Pang Qian finished speaking, another girl's voice sounded in the background. "Crab, let's go eat."

"Okay, I'm coming," Pang Qian turned to the side to say.

Gu Mingxi laughed. "You've only been at school for a day, and they're already calling you Crab?"

"I don't know why either, I never told them about it." Pang Qian scratched her head and suddenly said, "Gu Mingxi, hurry and send me your address. Otherwise your present will expire."

"Expire? Is it food?"

"No. But just hurry and send me your address."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then told her the address to his grandparent's house. He said to just address it to his mom, because he'd probably have to ask her to pick it up from the post office."

Pang Qian happily agreed. "No problem!"



A few days later, Li Mu received the parcel notification from the post office. In a sucking up manner, he asked Li Han if she needed help to pick it up. Li Han was busy discussing the pricing for the house construction and decoration, so she agreed

When she returned to their rental apartment, Gu Mingxi said, “Mom, remember I told you last time that Pang Qian would be sending a package to grandma’s house. When are you going to check? I think it should have arrived by now. Can you help me pick it up from the post office?”

Li Han said, “Oh, it’s already arrived. Your uncle went to get it.”

Gu Mingxi was very excited, “Then that means it’s already at grandma’s house?”

Li Han replied casually, “Mm. We’ll be going over in a few days for dinner. You can pick it up then.”

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Two days later, Li Han and Gu Mingxi went to her parent’s house for dinner. She asked Li Mu about the package.

Li Mu thought for a moment, and then said, “I left it on the table after I brought it back.” He went to look for it, but found that it was gone. Gu Mingxi watched him anxiously. Li Mu asked Huang Lingli and then went to ask Li Shiyu who was watching TV. “Son, have you seen the package I brought back and left on the table?”

Li Shiyu stood up and said, “Yeah, I saw it. It was for Aunt.”

Li Mu asked, “So where’s the package?”

Li Shiyu said, “I opened it.”

Gu Mingxi’s face immediately darkened.

Li Mu asked him a bit awkwardly, “If you opened it, then where’s the stuff?”

Li Shiyu pulled at the t-shirt he was wearing. It was a white Nike shirt with a light yellow and gray pattern on the front. He chuckled and said, “I’m wearing it. Aunt bought it for me, right? It looks good, but it’s just a bit too big.”

Gu Mingxi asked coldly, “Was there anything else in the package?”



Li Shiyu looked at him and thought, then said, “I think there was a card.”

Gu Mingxi stared at him, “Where is it?”

“I threw it away with the box,” Li Shiyu said indifferently.

Gu Mingxi suddenly took a step forward. Li Han grabbed him by the waist, and he clenched his teeth. After he calmed down, he lowered his head without saying a word.

Li Han whispered into his ear, “I’ll buy you another one that’s exactly the same. Stay calm.”

Gu Mingxi turned away and heard Li Mu and Li Shiyu’s conversation.

He was praising his son. “It really is a good brand. Our son looks great wearing it, much better than your cousin Mingxi.”

Li Shiyu said very pleased, “I’m going to play basketball tomorrow. I’m wearing this!” He glanced over at Gu Mingxi, and then his eyes landed on his empty shirtsleeves. He suddenly smiled and asked, “Oh yeah, Gu Mingxi, who’s Crab? Your girlfriend?”

“Where’s the card?” Gu Mingxi had been silent, but hearing those words, he couldn’t help asking.

“I said I threw it away.” Li Shiyu looked at him, raised his head and laughed.

Gu Mingxi’s shining eyes stared at him. Li Shiyu stared back, feeling extremely happy.

He really hated his cousin. He hated him so much.

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From translator: The author posted this at the end of her Ch.73 update (when she was originally writing this), presumably because some of her readers were getting butthurt that she wasn’t writing the story that they wanted. Personally, I appreciate that our leads are getting some time apart, because I always wanted to see what they would do without the other always by their side— Anyway, I felt the following was worth sharing.

Words from the author:



Let me say a few things about the story. Because the outline for this story was very detailed, when I was writing, I was also very calculative. My old readers will know that I won't ever let a story run off course. But there are times when, inevitably, a writer's intent and a reader's expectations are contrary to each other. I welcome you to guess how the story will unfold, but I won't give out spoilers. I know that everyone is waiting for the reunion, for the sweetness. But I haven't even gotten to the real reason that they've separated yet, so it wouldn't be suitable to write a reunion here.

In order to disperse any misunderstandings, I felt that I had to write a few words. Part 3 is indeed a bit tormenting, but it won't be without any sweetness. I promise that (1) I won't bring harm to the female lead, and (2) I won't bring physical harm to the male lead. I can't be too specific. All I can say is, please trust me that no matter what Gu Mingxi must suffer, he will remain strong inside.

As for Gu Guoxiang, I promise that I will write a reasonable ending. Not for the sole purpose of making him suffer, but he definitely won't simply be joyous and happy. But that's something that will come in the end.

Also, part 4 will be just as sweet as the beginning.

I suspect that a lot of girls will stop reading the text and wait until part 4 starts. But I want to say that if you don't suffer through the pain of part 3, how can you understand the sweetness that comes for Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian in the end?

Of course, you're free to do as you please. I will continue to write according to my plans. I only hope that if you're going to stop reading, that you do so quietly. You don't need to tell me about it. I will maintain the integrity of this story.

Actually, from the start, I was a writer who torments. But because my stories have happy endings, everyone feels that those tormenting parts are bearable (?). This is the same thing. All of Gu Mingxi's past experiences become his fortune in the future.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 74

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 74 | A Tale of Two Cities (1)

*A long distance relationship? I don't think it will work out.*

---

In the past years, Li Shiyu and Gu Mingxi had only met a few times. Although they were cousins, their relationship wasn't much different from two strangers.

Ever since Li Shiyu could remember, he'd known that his aunt was a great beauty. She married and moved to the southern E City. His uncle had a decent job and his family qualifications were good. They also had a son. Unfortunately, his cousin had an accident when he was 6 years old, and he became a crippled child.

The first time Li Shiyu saw Gu Mingxi, he was really startled. At the time, he was just 8 years old and Gu Mingxi was 11 years old. That was the first time Gu Mingxi had come to visit his grandparents after his accident. When they saw their grandson, their grandparents cried until their voices were hoarse. The other members of their family were much the same.

During those few days, everyone had pampered Gu Mingxi. When they ate, the adults would keep giving him food. Even Li Shiyu's favorite chicken legs were handed over to Gu Mingxi.

Li Shiyu watched quietly from the side as Gu Mingxi ate and cleaned up with his feet. When his grandparents gave him some stationary, he used his feet to flip through it as well.

Li Shiyu didn't really dare to speak to Gu Mingxi. Every time that Li Mu told him to go play with Gu Mingxi, he would just turn on the TV and watch a random show together. He didn't know how to interact with Gu Mingxi. Subconsciously, all he could think about was that this cousin of his was rather different than



himself.

Under Li Han's request, Gu Mingxi even put on a demonstration for their relatives, writing and drawing. His writing was very beautiful. When someone asked if Gu Mingxi could keep up in class, Gu Guoxiang would say lightly, "Mingxi is always top three in his year. He'll definitely be able to get into a top university in the future."

The ordinary student with scrawly handwriting, Li Shiyu was pissed. Just seeing Gu Mingxi writing, he would turn to the side and say a few belittling words.

Li Shiyu's great dislike for Gu Mingxi emerged when Gu Mingxi was taking the high school entrance exams. Li Han called to give her family happy news that he'd gotten into a top high school. His score even placed him 5th in the entire year. Li Shiyu's grandparents and parents immediately admonished Li Shiyu, with Gu Mingxi as an example of what he should be like.

Gu Mingxi lost his arms when he was young, and with his two legs, he was able to get such good grades. You have arms and legs, so why can't you do a good job studying?

13 year old Li Shiyu retorted to Li Mu, "Gu Mingxi has a rich dad! His clothes are all name brand! His family has a big house! His dad even has a car! We don't have any of that! What makes you think I should be a good student?!"

Li Mu was furious and couldn't stop himself from slapping Li Shiyu. Li Shiyu started to cry. Disagreeing with this, Huang Lingli immediately pulled her son into her arms and said to Li Mu, "Xiao Yu didn't say anything wrong! You don't have any ability either! If you want to compare Xiao Yu to Gu Mingxi, why don't you go compete with brother-in-law!"

The two parents started quarreling, and in the end, hits were exchanged.

In many families, the root of all family conflicts was one word, money.

-----

Gu Mingxi followed Li Han back to their rental, and he was still in a bad mood. He washed his face and went to bed early.

He laid on his bed for a long time, and then got up. Gu Mingxi bit onto a pen and sat down at his desk and wrote Pang Qian a text.



>> Pang Pang, I got your gift. I like it, thanks.

A little later, Pang Qian's reply came.

>> Does it fit?

>> It fits pretty welll.

>> When I come to visit next summer, you'd better wear it for me to see!

Gu Mingxi bent his head and responded, "Okay."

>> Gu Mingxi, when do you start school?

>> There's still another week.

>> We've been doing military training these few days. I'm dead tired.

>> I also have to participate in the training, but it should probably be a lot easier for me.

>> Oh yeah, Gu Mingxi, I'm going to buy a computer. It will be in the dorm. Then we can chat.

>> Okay.

>> Ah, I have to go.

Gu Mingxi was startled when she said she was busy. He wanted to ask why she needed to go out when it was already past 9. But in the end, he didn't ask and just responded, "Mm."

He lied back in his bed again, staring at the ceiling, in a daze. This rental was near B University, and it was about a ten minute walk to the school. This place was just a bit more than 30 sqm. One bedroom, one living room, one kitchen, one bathroom. Li Han added a bed in the living room. They planned to spend the next half a year there.

This was a very simple and crude house. It really was a peasant's house. The walls were stained by the leaking rain, the furniture was tattered, the closet door was nearly broken, the windows were covered in a layer of dirt and probably hadn't been washed in years. In the hot summer, Gu Mingxi had seen cockroaches and mice, and the corners of the rooms were filled with cobwebs. In the past, he'd never thought that he would live in a place like this one day.



That day, Gu Mingxi was feeling rather down. He let out a sigh and decided not to think about unhappy things. Just sleep early.

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Pang Qian ran down to the first floor of the dorm and saw Sheng Feng waiting there for her.

“Sheng Feng? What is it?” Pang Qian asked.

She and Sheng Feng were in the same major and year. They had just started military training and most people didn’t know each other yet. But since Sheng Feng was also from E City, when they had breaks, he and Pang Qian would often chat together. And so, they naturally grew closer.

— “You’re from First High? I’m from Vast Voyage.”

— “Do you know Wu Min? Ah, we went to the same junior high. He’s at Beihang now.”

— “What about Wang Song? You guys were in the same class too? What a coincidence. Wang Song and I were from the same primary school. We got along really well.”

— “He’s dating, I know. He and his girlfriend both got into Nanjing. What was his girlfriend’s name... Something Xiaoyan. Ah! That’s right, Li Xiaoyan!”

— “Yesterday I called Wang Song, and he told me that your nickname is Crab.”

Sheng Feng wasn’t very tall, just barely 170 cm tall. He wore a pair of glasses and looked very intellectual, but his gaze always carried an air of arrogance.

When Pang Qian walked up to him, he handed her a stack of papers. “You’re buying a computer the day after tomorrow, so you should look over these configurations first. Then you won’t be fooled when you go to pick one out.”

Pang Qian took the papers and looked at them. It looked to be different computer configurations, each with a pricing underneath. Sheng Feng even wrote down the pros and cons of each setup.

Pang Qian looked at him, “When did you put this together?”

Sheng Feng said, “Yesterday afternoon, I went to look around at the computer store. I found a few places that fit your price range and got a list of their specs.”



Pang Qian felt very apologetic. She just occasionally mentioned that she wanted to get a computer, and then Sheng Feng said that he'd go to the computer store with her on Sunday. When Pang Qian told Pang Shuisheng about it, he agreed. It wasn't convenient to buy it in E City and then move it to her, so she might as well buy it in Shanghai.

"Ah, thank you. I've troubled you too much." Pang Qian looked at the papers in her hand and Sheng Feng smiled. "No problem. Then I'll get going first. Take your time looking through it, and if there's something you don't understand, feel free to call me."

"Mm."

"We're going to the computer store the day after tomorrow. Don't forget."

"Mm."

Sheng Feng's left hand was stuffed into his pants pocket and he waved at Pang Qian with his right. "Goodnight, Crab."

Pang Qian took the papers and headed back up. After hearing about it, her roommate Yang Lu said with a giggle, "It's really obvious. Sheng Feng is pursuing you."

Pang Qian made a face 🙄 (embarrassed emote). "How could that be! I only met him a few days ago!"

Yang Lu said, "You underestimate these boys whose biological hormones were destroyed by high school life. When they get to college, they're just like male dogs, running around a girl's ass."

"Oh come on." Pang Qian couldn't take Yang Lu's analogy. "I don't intend to date anyway."

"Why not? Sheng Feng's not bad." Yang Lu didn't understand. "Crab, do you already have a boyfriend?"

Pang Qian didn't know how she should respond. She thought for a moment, and then said, "There is a boy. We grew up together. Originally, we agreed to come to Shanghai together, but in the end, he went to another city. There were times that I thought that after we got here, we would start dating, but maybe



we'll only be able to come this far, unable to reach that last step. Right now, we're in two different cities, and he hasn't really said anything to me. I'm not really sure what I feel for him right now either. Next summer, I'm going to visit him. After I see him, I'll probably know what kind of existence he has in my heart. Maybe at that time, we'll be together."

Yang Li bit on her lollipop and shook her head. "A long distance relationship? I don't think it will work out."

"Really?" Pang Qian looked at her suspiciously. "It's just four years, and we can see each other before then."

"You're too naive," Yang Lu said. "If I were you, I would definitely consider Sheng Feng. A long distance relationship really isn't reliable."

Pang Qian pursed her lips, without a word.

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Two days later, Sheng Feng went to the mall with Pang Qian to buy a computer. She spent 5200 dollars. Pang Qian offered to buy lunch, and he happily agreed.

When they were eating, Sheng Feng tested the waters with Pang Qian. She pretended she didn't see the signs, and since Sheng Feng was a smart person, he could see her reaction. He immediately retracted his questions so that the two of them wouldn't become awkward.

-----

Gu Mingxi finally started school. Li Han went with him to take care of the special admission procedures. He was studying software engineering, which was considered a popular major at B University. But Gu Mingxi didn't tell Li Han that he didn't actually like this major.

He didn't live in the dorms. Every day, he woke up in the rental house, washed his face and ate breakfast, and then put on his backpack and headed to class. After morning classes, he didn't have to go eat in the cafeteria, and he just returned home to eat lunch and rest. It was the same in the afternoon. The students in his class all treated Gu Mingxi politely, and they help him with things when needed. But in this time, Gu Mingxi hadn't made any new friends. Everyone was just merely an acquaintance. He was very lonely in his classes. A



few students would speak among themselves, that since he was disabled, his personality naturally became a bit reclusive.

Gu Mingxi was aware of this problem as well. He wasn't an entirely introverted person, but he could never talk to the people in his class. He was all alone in this place. Most of the people around him were all from the northern regions. Gu Mingxi tried to interact with people in his classes before, but they'd always just reply courteously.

This was a two-sided problem. Gu Mingxi wasn't willing to open himself up to people, so how could people try to understand him? Moreover, Gu Mingxi didn't live in the dorms. Everyday, outside of class, he spent his time in the rental house. So there were few chances for him to make friends.

Li Han asked Gu Mingxi how things were at school. Gu Mingxi always reported the good and never the bad. He'd always say, "It's going well."

But in truth, he didn't have any friends.

He gradually became a loner. Every day, he carried his backpack and walked silently to school. Except when it was raining. Then Li Han would send him to school with an umbrella and pick him up after class. Gu Mingxi was exempt from physical education and an elective class. He could even choose not to go to evening study class. The class head didn't even notify him about class events anymore. Essentially, his existence became a very particular one.

In the next few months, he and Pang Qian didn't have much contact. One, because it wasn't convenient. Two, because Pang Qian was always busy. Three, because Gu Mingxi felt that he didn't know what to talk about with Pang Qian.

Pang Qian got a computer, so she went online. But Gu Mingxi lived in a rental and there. Pang Qian's college life was very colorful and rich. She always told Gu Mingxi excitedly about where she went to play, what new clothes she'd bought, what movies she'd watched, what events she'd gone to... She was in Shanghai, the brilliant and colorful metropolis. How could she not be doing lots of things? How could she be as bored as him?

Z City was a very, very small city. Gu Mingxi would go to class every day. Then when the weekend came, he would follow Li Han to her parent's house for dinner. Then they would check out the progress on their new house.



Other than that, he didn't go anywhere.

It was with this stagnant life that Gu Mingxi welcomed the first midterm exams. But his results were contrary to all expectations. This outstanding student, who had gotten into B University with a 641 entrance exam score, actually failed many of his classes.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 75

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 75 A Tale of Two Cities (2)

*Then quit! Come and be my school junior!*

---

His counselor went to find Gu Mingxi to talk about it, but in the end, she didn't get a reason. Then she called Li Han, saying that she thought the drop in his grades was a temporary thing. After all, college studies was a lot more work than high school. Gu Mingxi just wasn't adapted to college life yet.

Li Han finally realized that her son was acting unusual. She waited for her son to return home so that they could have a talk. All this time, Gu Mingxi had been considering something, weighing his options. When Li Han pressed him about his situation, he finally found the courage to say it.

"Mom, I asked the professors about changing majors, but they all refused. They said that if you want to change majors, you have to take the exam in June. Also, the entrance score for the major you want to transfer to must be lower than the one for the major you started out in. No one's ever transferred to a more competitive major. But the two majors I'm interested in both have higher entrance scores than the one I'm in now. So even if I score high enough on the exam, the school wouldn't agree to the transfer."

Li Han was stupefied. "Change majors? Why do you suddenly want to change majors? Software engineering isn't good?"

"I kind of dislike it." Gu Mingxi's gaze was a bit stubborn. He said, "I never once thought about studying software engineering. I'd even rather study English over studying software engineering."

Li Han said, "Son, it wasn't easy for you to get into college. B University is already taking good care of you. Four years later, you might even get



recommended for post-graduate studies. That's not a bad academic history to have. Or maybe you'll be able to get a good job first."

Gu Mingxi persisted, "Mom, I'm not going to school for a diploma. I really want to learn things, to study the things I'm interested in. Then I'll be able to find a job doing something I enjoy."

"This is the way things are now. You don't like software engineering, but the school won't let you change majors. What do you plan to do? Are you planning on failing all your exams?" Li Han was a bit angry. "Mingxi, you didn't used to cause trouble like this before!"

"I want to quit school." Gu Mingxi looked at Li Han's expression. He said, "I want to quit school, Mom. I think that it's not too late if I do it now. I want to take the college entrance exams again. There's still half a year. I can get into a good school. What's important is that, even if it's a tier-2 school, I just want to be able to choose my major."

Li Han looked at him dumbfounded. "You'll be 20 years old at the next entrance exams. Then you won't graduate until you're 24!"

"If I continue studying like this, it will waste even more time," Gu Mingxi said. "I don't want to work in software engineering at all. Why would I study it?!"

Li Han looked at him for a little, then asked him coldly, "You want to go to school in Shanghai?"

"..." Gu Mingxi nodded his head. "Mm, I want to study in Shanghai."

Li Han stood still, and said only three words, "I don't agree."

At the start of December, there was a big snowfall in Z City. There was no rain mixed in at all, so it quickly piled up on the ground.

Gu Mingxi couldn't stand wearing covered shoes outside, so Li Han bought him a pair of padded shoes, the kind that old men wear. Thick, boorish, but easy to put on and take off. She also made him warm open-toe socks. Gu Mingxi didn't try to oppose it and just obediently wore it and went to class.

He would enter the classroom, wrapped up in a thick jacket. He sat down in the last row and shrugged off his backpack. Then he lifted his left foot to pull



down the zipper and take off the coat.

Gu Mingxi sat near the heater. The school didn't arrange for a special seat for him because the students often changed classrooms in college. They just left Gu Mingxi to adapt to it on his own, and so he used a regular desk just like all the other students.

This made it difficult for him to write.

Gu Mingxi's backpack was on the floor. He lowered his head and stuck his feet into his bag to pull out his class' notebook and writing utensils. After a moment, he decided to just give it up.

During the class lecture, he just sat there zoning out. All the computer engineering jargon became more and more unfamiliar and more and more incomprehensible to him. Gu Mingxi looked at his two feet on the desk. His toes were all red. A few days ago, Li Han had been uncomfortable, so Gu Mingxi had scrubbed and washed his clothes for several days with his feet. The water was bone-chilling. His feet immediately became frostbitten, all ten of them.

That day, with the warm air blowing, his feet felt extremely itchy. It only got a little better when Gu Mingxi rubbed his two feet against each other.

His and Li Han's new house had already completed all arrangements. Li Han said they would leave it vacant for another month and then move in before (Chinese) New Year's.

Li Mu also had his eye on a three bedroom house. It was new. He'd already put his old house on the market and soon, people came to ask about it. Li Mu and Li Han discussed and decided that they had to sell the old house first, in order to have the money to buy the second house. And then it would take some time to prepare the house for living. It would take about half a year from the time they bought the house to when they could move in. During that time, he was hoping that he and his wife and son, and his parents, would be able to stay awhile at Li Han's new house.

Li Han found this difficult, having so many people move into the new house. And for half a year at that. No matter who you asked, they would find it uncomfortable. She discussed it with Gu Mingxi and he said, "It's fine if Grandma and Grandpa come to live with us, but why can't Uncle and his family



just rent a house in the meantime, like we're doing now?"

Li Han didn't know how to respond. From Li Mu's words, he'd said that Li Han and Gu Mingxi had spent nearly two months staying at their house, so it wasn't unreasonable for them to all stay at Li Han's new place for a short while.

Li Han said, "Your uncle doesn't make much money, and every month of rent is several hundred dollars."

After being depressed for a bit, Gu Mingxi said, "If you want to allow it, I don't have any problems. But I'm not going to live there. I'd rather just stay in this rental."

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One afternoon, as Gu Mingxi was returning from class, he slipped on a patch of frozen snow and fell.

It was a pretty impressive fall. His chin hit the ground and ended up with a wound.

With his blood dripping onto the snow, it was a shocking sight. Gu Mingxi struggled to get back on his feet. Since his jacket was thick and his sleeves were padded, the passersby didn't find anything abnormal about his physical condition. Slipping and falling on ice was a common sight, so no one offered to help him.

Gu Mingxi turned his neck and rubbed his tingling chin onto his shoulder. His nose and ears had turned red from the cold. He sat cross-legged on the ground and struggled to put his backpack back on. Then when he stood up, he realized his ankle had been twisted.

He limped back to the rental house. Li Han wasn't home. She'd probably gone to the new house. Gu Mingxi sat by the furnace to warm up his feet. Afterwards, he went to the bathroom to wash his face and feet.

When he saw the mirror, he saw the the blood on his chin had already started to clot. The wound was about 1 cm long. Gu Mingxi looked at himself in the mirror and laughed a self-deprecating laugh.

He returned to his room and texted the class head. He said he wanted to take the afternoon off and not go to class.



The class head quickly replied, “No problem.”

Gu Mingxi was the only student in their class who could just take time off at a whim without an official request for leave.

Li Han had some food, but Gu Mingxi didn’t have an appetite. He sat on his bed for awhile and then suddenly wanted to call his father.

A 19 year old boy, in this moment of confusion, would naturally want to ask his father for help. Even if his father had already hurt him, in this moment, Gu Mingxi remembered that it was Gu Guoxiang who had reprimanded and taught him time after time.

After he arrived in Z City, out of consideration for his mother’s feelings, Gu Mingxi had never called Gu Guoxiang. After the phone call connected, his father’s calm and familiar voice rang in his ear. Gu Guoxiang asked, “Hello, who is this?”

Gu Mingxi called out quietly, “Dad.”

“Mingxi?!” Gu Guoxiang was surprised. “Mingxi! Is it you?”

“Mm, it’s me,” Gu Mingxi said. “Dad, are you well?”

“I’m great. What about you, are you and your mother doing well?” Gu Guoxiang said, “I watched the weather report, and Z City already had several snowfalls. Is it very cold over there? Are you used to it?”

“It’s alright.” Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then asked, “Dad, has the baby been born?”

When it came to this question, Gu Guoxiang’s feelings were very complicated. A flash of joy crossed his mind and he really wanted to share about it. But when he recalled he was talking to his disabled, elder son, he felt that saying this to Gu Mingxi might pain him.

He responded simply, “Mm, (she’s) already born. It hasn’t been a month yet.”

“Is it a boy or a girl?”

“A girl, 3.4 kg.”

“What’s her name?”



Gu Guoxiang said, “Her name is Gu Ziyue. *Zi* with *mu* and *xin* components, and *yue* with a *wang* radical.”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “Dad, congratulations.”

Gu Guoxiang was stupefied, and his eyes immediately watered.

He asked, “Mingxi, how are your studies? Are you adapting well to school?”

Gu Guoxiang didn’t hide it from him. This was the reason he called in the first place. “It’s not going well. It’s nothing else, but I don’t like this major.”

Gu Guoxiang heard that his tone sounded strange, and asked, “What’s the matter?”

Gu Mingxi opened his lips. As he as about to start telling his father about it, a baby’s cried suddenly sounded in the background.

Gu Guoxiang immediately said, “Ah, Xiao Yue, don’t cry. Mingxi, let me calm the baby first. I’ll call you back when I have time. Is this your cellphone number?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll hang up first. Remember to take care of yourself.”

Gu Guoxiang hung up the phone. Gu Mingxi loosened his cheek and the phone fell with a *pa!* onto the bed.

He sat down again and made another call.

“Hello, Gu Mingxi?” Pang Qian asked, her voice carrying a smile. “I was just about to text you. I’m about to have a nap. Did you eat yet?”

He lied, “Yeah.”

“I had braised pork and cabbage today. Later, they also had sweet and sour pork ribs. Ugh, so hateful! You don’t know how delicious our cafeteria’s sweet and sour pork ribs are!” Her voice cracked a bit there. “Wait a second. Let me get onto my bed.”

Pang Qian slept on the top bunk. After she climbed up, she pulled closed her curtains. After she curled up inside her blankets, she went back to the phone, “Is it cold over there? Did it snow?”

“Mm.”



“Be careful, and make sure you don’t get frostbite on your feet. Make sure you wear proper shoes when you go out!”

He smiled, “I know.”

“Gu Mingxi, recently, you haven’t texted me much. Are you really busy?” Pang Qian asked. “You’re not dating, are you?”

“How could that be. No, I’m not.” Gu Mingxi’s voice was light. “I’m just... a bit busy with school.”

“Gu Mingxi.”

“Mm?”

“Are you in an bad mood?”

“...” Gu Mingxi was silent a bit, then said, “Pang Pang, I fell down while I was walking today.”

“Did you hurt yourself?” Pang Qian cried out, “Aiya, it’s snowing a lot over there, so the roads are slippery. Be careful when you’re walking! Does it hurt?”

“I scraped my chin and twisted my foot a bit.”

“...” Pang Qian asked, “Gu Mingxi, have you been disfigured?!”

He burst out laughing. “I’m fine. It’s just a small scrape.”

“You can still laugh? Rub some Yunan Baiyao (medicine) on your foot. Don’t be lazy.” Pang Qian held her phone and asked, “Gu Mingxi, are you unhappy? This whole time, I keep feeling like you’re unhappy.”

He thought for a moment, then said, “Pang Pang, if I were to quit school right now and take the entrance exam again next year, would it be very strange?”

“Ah?!” This question was a lot crazier than a sprained foot. Pang Qian asked, “What’s wrong? Is someone bullying you? Are you unhappy with your studies? Or... You don’t like your major?”

She really understood him. Gu Mingxi said, “I don’t like this major. Moreover, it’s already been a semester but I haven’t made any friends. Every day is really boring. There’s not even anyone to talk to.”

He hesitated a moment, then said, “I really miss you. And everyone else.”



Pang Qian, “...”

“You still haven’t answered my question. Do you think I could take the entrance exam again next year?”

Pang Qian seriously pondered the question, and then said, “Gu Mingxi, although your idea looks to be kind of strange and seems a bit unrealistic, but if you really don’t like your major at all, then I support you. I listened to your suggestion to study at this financial institute, and I’m really happy to be here. I really like this major. Thank goodness I didn’t listen to my mom to study law, engineering, or English... So if you want to take the entrance exam again, I’ll definitely support you. And I’m sure you’ll be able to get a high score.”

“Pang Pang,” Gu Mingxi smiled. “If you encourage me like this, I’m really going to quit school.”

“Then quit! Come and be my school junior!” She laughed. “This school senior will make sure to take care of you!”

The two of them both laughed. Then Pang Qian said, “If you’re bored, you can call me. You know my schedule. As long as I’m not in class, you can call me whenever.”

“Won’t I bother you?”

“Gu Mingxi, what’s with your words?” Pang Qian pouted. “In this world, aside from my mom and dad, you’re the closest person I have.”

After he hung up the phone, Gu Mingxi felt that he was in a much better mood. He was about to warm up some food when his phone started ringing again.

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He looked down and saw an unfamiliar number. Before, he used his right shoulder to hold up his phone, but this time he changed to his left shoulder. He answered the phone and a loud greeting passed to him.

“Gu Mingxi? Is it you? It’s Zhou Nanzhong!”

Gu Mingxi was surprised but also happy. “Zhou Nanzhong?”

“Crab just sent me your number. This kid... Even if you go to Z City, you have to



keep in touch. Leaving without a sound, and none of us even got to treat you to a meal and send you off. You're just going to college, but you made it out like you were going to disappear forever. That's not right!"

Gu Mingxi felt all warm inside. "Right, I was wrong. When I get a chance, I'll treat you guys to a meal."

"How are you getting along at B University?"

"Alright. What about you? You're at Wuhan, right?"

"Yeah, for civil engineering. I'll be working on construction sites later!" Zhou Nanzhong laughed. "If you get the chance to come to Wuhan, give me a call. We spent three years as brothers. Don't just cut off relations!"

Not long after Zhou Nanzhong hung up the phone, Wang Song called. He and Li Xiaoyan were both studying at Nanjing University. They were both enjoying the sweet campus student life.

"Gu Mingxi, you rotten kid! I spent three years working as a cow and horse for you, and then you just disappear to college!" Wang Song gnashed his teeth in anger. "Good thing Xiao Qian sent me your number. You're really too heartless!"

Gu Mingxi already had no words.

Wang Song said, "Oh yeah, I have to remind you about something. I have a primary schoolmate named Sheng Feng. We keep in touch, and this kid's in the same class as Xiao Qian. He keeps pestering me about whether Xiao Qian has a boyfriend. I just directly let him give up on the idea. Gu Mingxi, I can only do so much. Whether or not you can hold onto Xiao Qian is up to you!"

After Wang Song hung up, he got a call from Jiang Zhiya.

"Gu Mingxi! Hey! How are you? Crab sent me your number. I didn't believe it was your number and thought she was tricking me!"

Jiang Zhiya got into Zhejiang University of Media and Arts for broadcasting, a future host and presenter. After she spoke a few words to Gu Mingxi, she couldn't help from crying.

"Why aren't you together with Crab?! You're the worst! I'll only allow you to be together with her. If you want to get together with another girl, I don't agree



to it!”

Gu Mingxi couldn't help from laughing until his shoulders shook.

Just then another call came, but Gu Mingxi couldn't cut off this call. When Jiang Zhiya finished talking, he moved the phone next to his foot and took care of his missed call.

It was Xiao Yujing.

“Wang Song gave me your number,” Xiao Yujing said. “Gu Mingxi, are you well?”

“Alright.” Gu Mingxi asked, “What about you? Is Peking University good?”

“It's fine. I just had a meal with Wu Min the other day, since he's at Beihang. You came up in our conversation.”

“What did you say?”

“We just wondered if you were doing well or not.” Xiao Yujing giggled. “No one had any news of you. When Wang Song told me he had your number, I immediately called. You're not in class right now, right?”

“No.” Gu Mingxi felt very touched. Then he asked, “How are you and Xie Yi now?”

“There's nothing much. Sometimes we chat online and send emails,” Xiao Yujing said. “We're just friends. I won't get together with him.”

“Are you leaving the country in the future?”

“Yeah, definitely,” she answered evenly.

He smiled and said, “Good for you.”

Later, Gu Mingxi also got a call from Jian Zhe. He was at E University, studying environmental science. He told Gu Mingxi that Liu Hanlin was at Ningbo. He was in class now, so he'd call afterwards.

Aside from these classmates, Gu Mingxi also received texts from a lot of people, from all across the country. Some of those people already felt like strangers to him. Some of them were people who he'd probably remember faces for but might not be able to recall their names. But their text messages were all



directed happily to him.

>> Gu Mingxi, it's Sun Mingfang. Do you remember me? Crab gave me your number. I heard you were at B University. That's great. *Jiayou!* When you come back, we should all go out together. We're junior classmates, but we haven't had a reunion yet.

>> Gu Mingxi, it's Hu Tianli. I know that you always wanted to beat me up because I stole Crab away for two years! Hahaha... I'm studying for the entrance exam again. I really envy you guys for being in college already. You don't know how hard I have it now!

>> Gu Mingxi, it's Wu Min. This is my number. Stay in touch. If you're free, come visit us in Beijing. We'll all play games together!

>> Xiao Gu, Xiao Gu, it's Ge Xiaozhuang! It's me, Clam! I can finally contact you! When are you coming back to E City? Oyster took Pearl back home and got married. Shark and Crab are both in Shanghai now, and you've gone to Z City. I'm the only one left here! It's so boring!

...

The entire afternoon, Gu Mingxi sat on his bed with his back against the wall. Because he was on his phone for so long, it had heated up a lot. Finally it ran out of battery and shut off.

He was the only one home. He felt that this was the day he'd spoken the most after arriving in Z City. One after another, the voices of his past classmates rang in his ear, and the images of their faces flashed across his mind.

He would have his head bent over to the left and then to the right. Then he'd be pressing the phone buttons with a pen in his mouth. His neck ached, but he felt extremely happy inside.

Gu Mingxi plugged in his phone to charge it. He struggled to turn on the phone, and then he quickly sent Pang Qian a text.

>> Pang Pang, thank you.

She quickly replied, "Just remember to take me out for a meal."

— My Mister Ostrich —







# Chapter 76

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 76 A Tale of Two Cities (3)

*Am I a very troublesome person?*

---

Gu Mingxi and Li Han had a great big quarrel regarding quitting school. As more time passed, Gu Mingxi became more anxious. The college entrance exam wasn't a simple matter, and he would have to study a lot for it. He would also have to go back to E City to register for the exam, which means that he would have to complete his withdrawal process by spring.

But quitting school required the agreement of the head of the family. Gu Mingxi had a difficult time convincing Li Han. She'd already thrown very ugly words at him, like selfish, lacking filial piety, not knowing one's place, ungrateful, too great ("unreasonable") aspirations...

Gu Mingxi was stressed from things he'd never experienced before, and during all this, Li Han even did some excessive and undue things. In order to dispel Gu Mingxi's idea, when he asked for her help putting on a long-sleeved shirt, she refused.

Unable to put on his thermal underpants, Gu Mingxi ended up leaving for school in a single pair of thin pants. In the -10 C weather, his whole body trembled and his legs became numb. When he arrived at school, he couldn't even lift his right leg.

When he returned home, Gu Mingxi was cold and hungry. He wanted to eat, but realized that there was no food in the kitchen. Li Han sat at the side watching TV as she knit with her glasses on. When she saw Gu Mingxi quietly return to his room, she got up and made him a bowl of noodles.

Delicious tomato and beef noodles with a poached egg on top.



Gu Mingxi knew that Li Han was telling him that if he left her, he wouldn't be able to take care of himself. Although her method was cruel and extreme, Gu Mingxi realized what the problem was.

His mother had spend her entire life working hard and looking after him. In order to take care of him when she was younger, she even gave up the idea of having another child. When she entered middle age, his father had an affair and they divorced. His father remarried and had another child. But Li Han had never once thrown away Gu Mingxi. She didn't push her sufferings onto her son or blame him for anything. She still worked hard to accompany him while he studied, to take care of his food. Gu Mingxi didn't have arms, so Li Han took on all the house chores and never asked Gu Mingxi to help. And he'd enjoyed a peaceful life where he was fed and clothed.

But now, what was it that Li Han wanted?

She wasn't young anymore. She'd grown old and suffered emotional wounds. She just wanted to return to her home, buy a house, and live out the rest of her life with her parents and her son. This place had her family and her old friends. Falling leaves return to their roots. Li Han had already retired. She didn't want to leave this place again.

And Gu Mingxi's physical condition meant that he would never be like other boys. He couldn't just pick up and go to a new place all on his own. For him, that was a really difficult thing.

This was a very conflicting and prickly problem. Gu Mingxi sometimes did feel like he was being selfish and unfilial. But there were also times where he felt very wronged.

When he was on the phone with Pang Qian, she said, "Why don't you finish and graduate and then come here for post-graduate studies?"

When Gu Mingxi didn't respond, she bit her lip and continued, "When that time comes, even if your mom doesn't come, it's not a big deal. I can just keep studying too, and we can live together and I'll take care of you."

She was really very innocent. Gu Mingxi laughed and said, "How can I live with you?"



“Aren’t the rooms for post-graduate students two-person rooms?”

“Have you ever heard of a male and female living in the same room?”

“If we can’t live at school, then we can just rent a place off campus.” Pang Qian didn’t think there was a problem at all. “Rent a two bedroom place, one room for you, one room for me. I can take care of you, really. If you don’t like the food in the cafeteria, then I can cook for you. I’ll learn how to cook.”

“Pang Pang.” Gu Mingxi’s voice dropped. “Am I a very troublesome person?”

“Not at all.”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “Forget it, let’s not talk about it. I probably won’t be able to become your school junior. My mom won’t agree to me quitting school, so I can’t do anything about it.”

Pang Qian didn’t know how to comfort him either, but she really didn’t like to hear Gu Mingxi sound so crestfallen. She said, “Gu Mingxi, don’t be so discouraged. My dad always says that when the boat gets to the pier, it will go straight with the current (things will be alright in the end). Nothing can’t be overcome!”

“I know,” he said. “I realized that I’ve really turned into a mess recently.” He breathed out deeply. Then he said, “A year ago when we were studying for the entrance exam, I never thought that this was how college life would be.”

“Finals are coming soon. Work hard.”

He felt a bit guilty.

Pang Qian continued, “In another half a year, I’ll come to find you.”

“...”

“I emailed you some recent pictures. Did you see them?”

“Yeah, you’re very pretty now. You know how to dress up now.”

“Yang Lu taught me how to put on makeup. And she helps when I buy new clothes too, teaching me how to match clothes.” Pang Qian’s voice softened. “How come you’ve never sent me any picture? Don’t you have a computer? Why don’t you ever go online?”



Gu Mingxi chuckled and said, “I don’t have a camera or a webcam. And the rental house doesn’t have internet.”

“But Gu Mingxi, I haven’t seen you in almost half a year.”

He said, “Didn’t you say that you were coming in the summer? You’ll be able to see me then.”

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January 2004, Li Mu sold off the old house and dragged his whole house along to Li Han’s new place. The grandparents lived in Li Han’s room, and Li Mu and his wife stayed in Gu Mingxi’s room. Li Shiyu slept on temporary bed in the living room. And Li Han and Gu Mingxi continued living in the shabby rental by B University.

When Li Mu went to pay the down payment on his new house, Li Han went along with him. She handed over 80 thousand and wished him well. Li Mu, once again, asked for more. He said that they didn’t have enough to cover the cost of renovations, and he wanted to borrow 5 thousand dollars from his sister.

Li Han lent him that money and had him write a promissory note.

That (Chinese) New Year, Li Han’s family all gathered at the new house for dinner. She and Li Mu also had an older sister named Li Chun. She married and moved to a district nearby Z City. That year, she brought her husband and daughter back for the family dinner.

Seeing their children and grandchildren together in this place, Gu Mingxi’s grandparents were very happy. Li Han, watching on at the scene inside her new home, was also touched to tears.

But she didn’t feel at all like she was the owner of this house. She and Gu Mingxi hadn’t lived a single day in this house, and when they finished dinner, the two of them would be heading back to their rental house.

The evening on the eve of the new year was very cold. The snow had piled up very thick. Li Han and Gu Mingxi walked on the road, wrapped in their thick coats. The sky was blooming with fireworks and the sounds of firecrackers were all around. Gu Mingxi silently looked ahead, slowly walking forward.

As the year came to an end, Gu Mingxi remembered the things that had



happened in the past year.

His life had undergone enormous changes, and it felt as if he were dreaming. He was no longer that young and inexperienced youth sitting on the First High stands, and that gluttonous girl who loved smiling and playing was no longer by his side. He stood on the street in a small city in the north, breathing in the foreign air, the cold wind striking his face like daggers, hair disheveled and covering his eyes.

Gu Mingxi looked southeast into the distance. More than a thousand kilometers away. That's where his girl was.

Gu Mingxi didn't fail his final exams. After cramming up to each exam, he was able to coast on by, barely passing all his classes.

At this time, Gu Mingxi felt that his life was a big mess, but also calm like water. He wanted to cultivate an interest in software engineering. Since he couldn't quit school, he should just do a good job. Spending so much time, effort, and money, he couldn't really just sit in class daydreaming, day after day.

After the new year, Li Mu's new house started renovations. By summer, they would move out. Thank the Lord. When that time came, Gu Mingxi and Li Han would also be able to move out of this rental house.

And when summer came, Pang Qian would also be visiting. When he thought of that girl, he always felt like smiling.

Gu Mingxi felt that his and Li Han's bad luck would slowly pass. Gradually, he calmed down and got ready to study hard. But once again, misfortune struck.

One day in early May, Gu Mingxi returned home and knocked on the door. No one answered. He had to drop his backpack on the ground and pull out his keys with his foot, and then unlock the door.

"Mom—" He called out as he looked around the room. For seemingly no reason, his heart started to feel anxious.

The rental house was pitifully small, and you could see all around with a single glance. Gu Mingxi suddenly recalled the year he started junior high, when he stood at the entrance to the bathroom and saw Li Han lying in a pool of blood.



Gu Mingxi charged to the bathroom. No one. Then he checked the kitchen next to it, and immediately saw Li Han lying on the floor.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 77

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 77 A Tale of Two Cities (4)

*Pang Pang, we'll have a chance to meet.*

---

A pot of soup was boiling on the stove, the liquid nearly gone. The vegetables already turned yellow. Gu Mingxi lifted his foot and turned off the fire. Then he kneeled down next to Li Han and called to her, “Mom! Mom!”

He leaned over and bit the back of Li Han’s shirt collar. Her whole body was soft and she didn’t have a response.

“Mom! Mom, wake up!” Gu Mingxi cried out again. Li Han still didn’t move. He was in a panic, but he didn’t want to keep randomly pushing at his mother. He ran back to the living room and found his phone to dial 120 (ambulance).

When he was giving them the address, Gu Mingxi’s eyes were watery and his voice was trembling, but he did his best to stop his tears from falling. He knew that at this moment, crying was the most useless thing to do. No matter what happened to Li Han, he was her only son and she was the closest person he had. What he needed to do was definitely not cry, but rather to take care of matters in a composed manner.

As he waited for the ambulance to arrive, Gu Mingxi quickly emptied his backpack and put in Li Han’s ID card, patient record card, wallet, *etc.* After a moment, he decided to call Li Mu. When he heard what happened, he became anxious and immediately said, “Don’t worry, I’ll be right over!”

A few minutes later, the ambulance came. The medical staff came to check Li Han and confirmed that she was unconscious. Then they lifted her out on a stretcher.

Li Mu hurried over on his motorbike and took Gu Mingxi to the hospital.



In the hospital's emergency room, the doctor asked about Li Han's condition in the past few days. Gu Mingxi said that she was often fatigued and her face was jaundiced. She would also throw up whatever she ate. A few days ago, she kept saying that her stomach felt bloated and it hurt. She also had a fever. After she took some fever medication, she slept and then seemed better. Neither of them felt anything was strange.

The doctor asked, "Has the patient ever suffered from a long-term illness?"

Gu Mingxi signaled for Li Mu to give the doctor Li Han's patient card. He replied, "Eleven or twelve years ago, she suffered from Hepatitis A, but she recovered."

The doctor nodded, "Alright, we'll see."

Two hours later, they received the results from the CT. The doctor called Gu Mingxi and Li Mu over with a somber expression. He told them that after initial testing, Li Han was found to have a tumor in her liver. It wasn't yet clear whether this was benign or malignant. They would have to cut out a section for further testing. As it stands, it's more likely to be malignant, and the doctor told them it would be best for the family to be mentally prepared. Based on the size of the tumor, if it was found to be malignant, this would be the intermediate stage of liver cancer."

Gu Mingxi and Li Mu didn't sleep at all that night. They waited in the hospital, but Li Han still didn't wake. When the sky brightened, Li Chun rushed over from the neighboring district. She was a woman, so she was much more careful with taking care of Li Han than Li Mu. Gu Mingxi remained at his mother's side, his head empty, feeling that this reality was too unreal.

Cancer— He'd never linked together that word with his mother before. Li Han looked very healthy. She was just 46 years old. If she dressed up a bit, she still looked like a dignified and beautiful middle-aged woman.

Gu Mingxi had even joked with her before, that if she wanted to find a boyfriend when they got to Z City, he wouldn't mind.

"Just let me see if he's a good person or not." At the time, he and his mother were standing together, looking into the mirror. Once, he had to look up towards his mother, but now, her head was only as tall as his chin. He said, "Mom, you're



still very pretty.”

At the time, Li Han’s cheeks flushed and she grabbed her son’s waist. “I’m already old. Finding a boyfriend? My only wish is for you to graduate college well. The best would be if you went on to post-graduate studies and then find a good job, marry a good woman, and have a baby for me to help take care of.”

Everyone says that good things happen to good people. Li Han was definitely a good person. She was kind, gentle, and generous. As a woman, as a mother, as a sister, she was so good there were no words to describe it. When she used to work for the metals company, she was also pretty popular. When Gu Guoxiang had his affair, all the employees backed Li Han, and for that time, Gu Guoxiang was greatly criticized. In the end, Li Han had looked at the big picture and peacefully divorced. She left many women exasperated, but the men all gave her a thumb’s up for being so daring. Things would definitely go well for her in the end.

Gu Mingxi always felt that Li Han would find happiness in the end, that she would find a good partner and grow old in this little town. He never thought that death was already creeping up on her.

Li finally woke up in the afternoon. Seeing her sister and brother’s grave expressions, she had an idea already. When she found a chance, she and Gu Mingxi had a chat by themselves. She told her son not to hide it from her, to tell her what illness she had.

Gu Mingxi said, “Mom, they’re still testing. The results will be out in two days.”

“Is it cancer?” Li Han asked.

“Not necessarily.”

Seeing Gu Mingxi’s languished face, Li Han reached out to stroke his cheek. She smiled and said, “Don’t worry. I won’t die so easily. If I die, what will you do?”

Two days later, Li Han’s liver sample returned. It was malignant.

Li Chun and Li Mu discussed and decided to move Li Han to Z City’s best hospital for further diagnosis. The result was the same.



Those days, Gu Mingxi spent his days and nights with Li Han in the hospital. When the class head called him, he just said that his mother was sick in the hospital and he couldn't go to class.

When Li Chun found out about this, she pleaded with Gu Mingxi to go to class. In her eyes, Gu Mingxi was still a child. When an adult was sick, what could a child do about it?

She said, "Your uncle and I (and our husband/wife) will take turns staying with her in the hospital. And there's the hospital staff. You don't have to worry.

In the end, it was Li Han who persuaded him to return to school. She said that it was almost time for final exams. She didn't want to see him fail his classes again.

Gu Mingxi spent his time going between school, the rental house, and the hospital. He explain his family situation to his counselor and she arranged for some of the students in his class to help him with things, like the washroom and getting food.

After classes, Gu Mingxi hurried over to the hospital and stayed with his mother until visitation hours were over. Then he would return back to the rental.

Every evening, he would stay in the rental house alone. Gu Mingxi washed and dried his own clothes, boiled his own water, and occasionally cleaned up the washroom.

Living on his own, he inevitably came across difficulties. For example, the after boiling water, the kettle is very hot. Gu Mingxi had to sit in a chair and raise up his legs to pour the water into a thermos. One time, after he scalded his toes on the kettle, the full pot of hot water fell over. And although Gu Mingxi's reactions were quick and he jumped away immediately, his foot was still burned by the spilling water, and several large blisters appeared on his foot.

He didn't tell anyone else about this. He just popped the blisters and went to the pharmacy for burn medication.

After discussion with the doctor, the best route was surgical removal of the tumor. But her current situation was suitable for a surgery. She needed to undergo chemotherapy treatment first.



When her health improved a bit, they started chemotherapy. Li Han's response to the treatment was very severe. She couldn't eat anything, and she was dizzy, nauseous, and fatigued. After three days, she lost a lot of weight and her eyes sunk into her face.

At the same time, the money for her treatment fees were flowing out. Li Han's retirement and insurance plan were tied to E City. When she went to Z City for treatment, she had to pay the full treatment amount first, and then she had to apply for reimbursement back in E City. Her bank card was with Gu Mingxi, and Li Mu kept urging Gu Mingxi to get the reimbursement taken care of since there wasn't enough money to pay for Li Han's treatment.

Li Han asked Li Mu if he could return a bit of the 50 thousand first. Li Mu spread his hands. All the money had been used to setup his new house. And he had a wife and son at home. He had to keep a bit in his savings.

Li Chun gave Gu Mingxi 10 thousand dollars, and some of Li Han's old friends and relatives saw her and all helped with the financial need. If they gave less, it was one thousand, if they gave more, it was five thousand. In the end, they scrambled up another 20 thousand dollars.

Li Mu felt a bit troubled by it, so he immediately called for his wife to take care of Li Han. Since Huang Lingli didn't work anyway, it would be like having a free caretaker.

And so, when Gu Mingxi went to visit his mother in the hospital, he often saw Huang Lingli eating things that were given by visitors – fruit, cakes, health products. If she didn't finish eating them, she took them home. When she saw Gu Mingxi, she didn't try to evade him, but said, "Your mom doesn't have an appetite. If I don't eat it, it will just go bad."

She asked Gu Mingxi for money. She said it so pleasantly, that she would make Li Han chicken or fish soup. But in the end, all of that food ended up down into her and Li Shiyu's stomachs.

"Your mom doesn't have an appetite. She said she couldn't eat it," she said.

Seeing that Huang Lingli was personally taking care of Li Han, Gu Mingxi clenched his teeth and endured. Li Han was in the hospital for half a month when the doctor said she could go home. Then after a bit of time, she would return to



the hospital for a checkup to see if she could have the surgery.

Gu Mingxi brought it up to Li Mu, about whether or not Li Han could stay in the new house. The rental house was really just too lousy, it wasn't suitable for a sick person to live there. Li Mu said that it was possible. Li Han could stay in Gu Mingxi's room, and then his family and Gu Mingxi could stay in the living room.

He pretended to be ignorant and refused to put out the money to rent a place. Gu Mingxi couldn't argue with him about it, so he just brought his mom back to that rental house.

He felt that he was very useless, a good for nothing. Really. He never knew that he was so incompetent before. That was his mother's house. There was a comfortable bed that they'd picked out after going through one after another at the furniture mart. The new house was bright and clean, and the air was fresh. But he couldn't bring his mother back there to recover. Just because there were a lot of things that he needed Li Mu's help with. Gu Mingxi didn't have arms. After he left school, he realized that there were a lot of things in the world that were very inconvenient for him to do. A lot of the things related with the hospital were taken care of by Li Mu, Li Chun, and Huang Lingli. Even when Li Han was tired of laying down and wanted to sit up, Gu Mingxi was unable to help.

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When they returned to the rental, Gu Mingxi had Li Han sleep on his bed. Huang Lingli came over during the days to take care of Li Han, and Gu Mingxi stayed with her at night.

Under these circumstances, Gu Mingxi really couldn't concentrate during class. He simply couldn't look at the books. When he went to the computer room, he just stared blankly at the screen.

He also hadn't checked his phone in a long time. Every once in a while, he would turn it on and he'd received more than a hundred messages. Most of them were from Pang Qian.

Gu Mingxi was mentally and physically fatigued, but he bit onto his pen and replied back, "Pang Pang, don't come up over the summer. My mom's not well recently, so we'll probably go somewhere else for her to see a doctor."

Pang Qian immediately called.



She asked, "Gu Mingxi, is Auntie sick?"

He answered, "Mm."

"What is it?"

"Nothing major, don't worry."

"I can go and visit her."

"No need, really. It's so far away, and if you come up, I won't be able to hang out with you. Moreover, we really are going to go somewhere for a bit." He patiently persuaded her. "Pang Pang, we'll have a chance to meet."

Pang Qian was silent for awhile, and then she finally agreed. She thought that if she really went over at this time, it would just be more trouble. She asked, "Gu Mingxi, why has your phone been off all this time?"

"I don't usually have much free time. I'm either busy or out. Whenever my phone rings, I can't immediately answer it. Don't even mention replying to messages. Whenever the phone vibrates in my pocket, it really bothers me, so I don't carry it around with me. You can understand, right?"

He sounded very sincere. Pang Qian quieted and finally said, "Yes."

Gu Mingxi sighed, "Mm, that's good then."

After the final exams concluded, Gu Mingxi, once again, failed several courses. When his counselor came to talk to him, he finally said, "Teacher, I want to take a year off."

Over summer break, Li Chun went along with Li Han and Gu Mingxi to the province's capital, S City. Li Han was admitted to the province's best hospital to prepare for surgery to remove her tumor.

Li Chun and Li Mu both needed to work. The half month before Li Han's surgery, Huang Lingli went to the hospital to take care of her. After a bit of rest following the surgery, she returned to Z City.

During that time, there was only Gu Mingxi to stay with Li Han.

They rented a small place near the hospital. Li Han slept on her bed and Gu Mingxi slept on the floor.



Many years later, Gu Mingxi would recall this period of time, as if it had all been a dream. It was during that time that he learned to cut vegetables, cook, and wash dishes.

With his backpack on, he would go to the market, and when he saw something he wanted to buy, he'd ask the boss to weigh some into a plastic bag and put it into his backpack. He also hung a string around his neck to carry his wallet. Gu Mingxi let the bosses take out the money themselves and put in any change. No one would cheat him. Towards this kind of boy, most people would lend a helping hand. The boss who sold shrimp would always give him a bit of extra shrimp. The boss who sold vegetables would always give him an extra bunch.

When he returned home, Gu Mingxi started to wash the vegetables and cut them up with his two legs.

At first, he wasn't very good at cutting things with his toes. In fact, he nearly cut off his toes. But after doing it many times, he gradually became familiar with it, and now, he did a pretty decent job cutting.

Cooking wasn't hard. The hard part was serving the food after it was cooked. Gu Mingxi could never figure out a way, and always had to ask Li Han to get up and help him.

A month after the surgery, Li Han had to undergo another two weeks of chemotherapy. So they never returned to Z City. From August to September, Li Chun, Li Mu, and Huang Lingli would come by every once in awhile to take care of Li Han. When Gu Mingxi was tidying up the hospital invoice, he realized that they'd already spent 250 thousand dollars.

They'd nearly used up his mother's treatment money, but there were still follow-up treatments and medicine was expensive. Gu Mingxi decided he needed to figure something out.

After discussing with Li Chun, he packed up a bag and boarded a train back to E City. He wanted to go to the insurance to reimburse some of the costs of treatment, but he also wanted to go ask Gu Guoxiang for help.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 78

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 78 Walk Down Memory Lane

*She had a grumpy face the whole time. Tell me honestly, do you want to cut off relations with her?*

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Gu Mingxi was a somewhat introverted boy. But he was still prideful. Although he didn't have arms, he always acted without embarrassment. He was always calm when he had to do things with his feet in front of others, and he didn't care about others' gazes. He would always do things that he could do on his own, and he would only ask for help as a last resort.

At the start, in school, how many people helped him with things? Moreover, he always had Pang Qian beside him on the way to and from school. Gu Mingxi rarely felt inconvenienced.

But now, he realized that he was too innocent at the time.

The sleeper rooms on the train were small and the restroom was cramped. In order to avoid using the restroom so often, Gu Mingxi just stopped drinking water. When he was hungry, he didn't ask anyone to help make him instant noodles, and instead ate the bread he brought along. When his throat was so dry it could catch fire, he finally took two sips of water.

Even so, he still needed to use the restroom. Gu Mingxi could only ask a male attendant to help him. The attendant accompanied him to the restroom, and the two of them squished into the small space. Gu Mingxi's face went completely red as the attendant helped him urinate. When he was finished, the attendant washed his hands and asked him with concern, "Are you taking the train by yourself?"

Nod.



“Why didn’t you have someone come with you?”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “I’ll be fine on my own.”

The train attendant looked at his dry and cracked lips and said, “Kid, don’t misunderstand, but drink some more water. I saw that your urine was very yellow. It’s not good to treat your body this way. If you need the restroom, you can just come to find me.”

Gu Mingxi lowered his voice, “Thank you, sir.”

For the twenty hour long train ride, Gu Mingxi laid in the bottom bunk of the sleeper. The entire night long, he didn’t feel like sleeping. It was morning when he arrived to the E City train station.

The sky was just lighting up, and the temperature was still cool. Gu Mingxi wasn’t wearing much, so the cold breeze made him shiver. In the meantime, he didn’t have anywhere to go, so he just sat on a bench in front of the station.

He looked around the square. It had been more than a year now since he’d left. He left the city he’d spent the first 19 years of his life in. A year later, he’d come back, and while everything looked the same, the people had all changed.

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Gu Mingxi sat there until 8:30 that morning, before he went to the public phone to call Gu Guoxiang. Gu Guoxiang already knew about Li Han’s matter, and he told Gu Mingxi to wait for him at the train station. He would drive over.

When Gu Guoxiang saw Gu Mingxi, he couldn’t believe his eyes. It had only been a year, but Gu Mingxi had actually changed so much.

In the past, he was a handsome boy. Tall stature, wide shoulders, not really thin. He had fair skin and clear eyes, hair cut short, and a smile was often on his lips. Gu Mingxi’s clothes were pretty elegant. All the girls at school had said he was handsome. If he’d had arms, he would have been one of the most popular boys.

But now Gu Mingxi, who was just 20 years old and in his prime, had become tanned and thin, languish and drab. Before, he’d been very attentive of his hair style, but now he’d cut his hair flat. His face was thin, his eyes were dark and dim. Staring at Gu Guoxiang with those eyes made him feel numb.



Gu Mingxi wore a white short sleeved shirt. After spending a night on the train, his clothes were all wrinkled and carried the slightly sour smell of sweat. He had on a pair of shorts, his legs bare, and a pair of flip flops on his feet.

Gu Guoxiang felt very bitter inside. This was his son. His formerly neat and handsome, even somewhat pampered son!

Gu Mingxi said, "Dad."

His voice was hoarse. He couldn't help to swallow. Gu Guoxiang was startled. "Get in the car and have some water. I have some mineral water in the car."

Then he quickly took off his jacket and put it onto Gu Mingxi's shoulders, and took his backpack from him. He said, "Why are you wearing so little? It's nearly October. Why are you dressed like it's the middle of summer?"

Gu Mingxi said, "It's easier to do things with shorts on."

"..." Gu Guoxiang looked at his short hair, and asked, "Why did you cut your hair so short?"

"It's easier to wash." Gu Mingxi smiled. "I wanted to shave my head, but Mom wouldn't let me."

"Your mom..." Gu Guoxiang pondered for a moment, then asked, "How is she?"

Gu Mingxi followed Gu Guoxiang to the car. Gu Guoxiang fed him half a bottle of water, and then Gu Mingxi told him about Li Han's illness and treatment process. Gu Mingxi sat in the passenger seat, and when he finished his explanation, he turned his head to look at his father. He said, "Dad, can you give us more money? We might not have enough to cover Mom's treatment costs."

Gu Guoxiang held onto the steering wheel with both hands, looking forward silently.

He brought Gu Mingxi back to the New Gold Park and stopped the car. As they walked through the area, they would sometimes run into old neighbors or colleagues.

"Mingxi! Aiya, Mingxi's home!" Auntie Qiu used to work in the same department as Li Han. Now, she'd retired and stayed at home to watch her



grandchildren. When she saw Gu Mingxi, she was pleasantly surprised. After a moment, she grew suspicious. “Mingxi ah, why have you gotten so thin? And why have you gotten so tanned? Are you unused to the food in the north?”

Gu Mingxi slowed his steps and nodded. “Mm, I’m not used to the food.”

Auntie Qiu asked, “How’s your mom?”

“Alright.”

“Are you back for National Day?”

Gu Mingxi glanced at his father beside him and then nodded. “Yes.”

“You have a little sister.” Auntie Qiu looked at Gu Guoxiang, not at all unfriendly. She smiled and said, “Mingxi, hurry and graduate, get married, and have a baby. Your child can even go to school together with their little aunt!”

Gu Guoxiang’s face darkened. Not afraid of him, the retired Auntie Qiu started to hum as she walked away.

Gu Mingxi felt a bit awkward. Gu Guoxiang coughed and then lit a cigarette. He said, “Let’s go. We’ll go up and see your sister.”

Gu Mingxi had only lived in the New Gold Park for a year previously.

After Gu Guoxiang opened the door to the house, Gu Mingxi realized that the entire house had changed.

In the beginning, a lot of the furniture and decoration had been chosen by Li Han. But now, all of those things had disappeared. The simple yet elegant pastel-colored sofa in the living room was now replaced by a grand palace-style sofa. The floor was also covered with carpet. The originally round, dinner table had now become a white, long Western-style table. A small bar had even been set up in the corner of the living room.

Gu Mingxi had never seen that woman. Hearing the door open, she came out wearing a nightgown. With her fluffy hair loose behind her head and young face without makeup, she yawned and said, “Where did you go out so early in the morning?”

When she saw Gu Mingxi, her face immediately changed. Her eyes flitted over to his empty sleeve and laughed. “Oh, so this is Mingxi?”



And then she called towards the north-facing room. “Ms. Hou, bring my Xiao Yue out. Her brother’s come to see her.”

That’s when Gu Mingxi realized that the room arrangements had changed. The small south-facing room by the master bedroom had become the baby’s room. Inside was a pink crib, and the room was filled with toys. There were also countless boxes of milk powder and diapers.

The room Gu Mingxi had stayed in had become the nanny’s room. A 40 year old nanny came out with the baby. It was Gu Mingxi’s first time seeing Gu Ziyue. She was just 9 months old and she had a head full of dark hair. She was plump and cute. Her facial features looked like Gu Guoxiang. No wonder her father liked her so much.

Gu Guoxiang introduced Gu Mingxi. “This is current wife, Fang Hui. You can call her Auntie Fang.”

Gu Mingxi couldn’t say it. That woman looked too young. As he was about to open his mouth, Fang Hui said, “Don’t call me Auntie. It makes me sound so old. You can call me Linda.”

Gu Mingxi was silent for awhile. Then he sat down at the table and reached his legs into his packed bag. He pulled out a small lamb doll from his bag and raised his leg to put it onto the table. Then he said, “It’s the first time I’m meeting Xiao Yue, so I bought her a doll. Since she was born in the year of the sheep, I bought her a little lamb.”

Fang Hui’s expression immediately changed. She gave a cold laugh and said, “Thank you, Mingxi. But we’re not a superstitious family. We don’t believe in that nonsense about girls being born in the year of the sheep having difficult lives. Xiao Yue is very healthy. Her father and I like her very much. She’ll have a very safe and smooth life.”

Gu Mingxi was caught off guard. He said quietly, “That’s not what I meant.”

Fang Hui stood up and carried Gu Ziyue. She looked at Ziyue’s face and then she looked over at Gu Mingxi. She frowned and said to Gu Mingxi, “Your dad said that you and Xiao Yue looked alike, but I don’t think so. Ms. Hou, what do you think?”



Ms. Hou immediately responded, “Yes, Xiao Yue’s skin is much fairer.”

Gu Guoxiang was silent the whole time. Everyone sat on the sofa. Ms. Hou watched as Gu Ziyue crawled around on her play mat. Xiao Ziyue already crawled very quickly, and she quickly clamored over to Gu Mingxi’s foot. She sat on the ground and lifted her head to smile at Gu Mingxi. Then she reached out her fingers to play with Gu Mingxi’s foot. Just as Gu Mingxi pulled back his foot, Ziyue was already picked up by Fang Hui.

“Silly girl, your brother’s feet are dirty.” She placed Gu Ziyue on her thigh and turned to look at Gu Mingxi. “Mingxi, how long are you planning on staying?”

Gu Mingxi said, “I’m going home tonight.”

“Oh, and I was going to arrange a place for you to stay.” Fang Hui smiled. “You’re not a small kid anymore, so it wouldn’t be very convenient for you to stay here. Ah, that’s right, how’s your mother?”

Gu Mingxi explained briefly, and then Fang Hui shook her head and let out a sigh. “Cancer is very painful. Even if you spend more money on it, it’s no use.”

She was teasing Gu Ziyue in her arms, as she said, “Raising a child leaves you feeling bright. Raising the elderly leaves you loathing. Raising our Xiao Ziyue needs quite a bit of money, but this money is worth it. Mingxi, let me go over our accounts for you. Xiao Yue’s milk powder costs 1800 every month. Diapers are about 700, clothes 500. And then other food supplements, snacks, toys cost another 1000. Ms. Hou’s salary is 3000, and then there are classes that cost 200 per class. When she grows up, we’ll have to let her study piano and art. That all needs money! To put it in pleasant terms, your dad is a chief engineer, but actually he gets a fixed wage. Moreover, he’s going to retire in thirteen years. In that time, we’ll have to save enough money to send Xiao Yue to college, right? Ah... Mingxi, I’m worried about your mother’s illness as well, but to be honest... Even though I feel for you, it’s a difficult thing to ask of us. How about this. I’ll give you 20 thousand and you don’t have to return it. Use it to buy your mom some health products.”

After she spoke her part, what else did Gu Mingxi have to say? He just looked at his father silently. Gu Guoxiang lowered his eyes guiltily.

Fang Hui went into her dressing room and came out looking like a modern, hot



mom. She really gave Gu Mingxi 20 thousand dollars and then pushed out the baby stroller. She called Ms. Hou to go out for some sun. Gu Guoxiang said, "Today, Mingxi's come over to eat a bit. Let Ms. Hou stay and cook something."

Fang Hui immediately said, "Xiao Yue has to go to the park for some sun every day at this time!"

Gu Guoxiang said, "Then why don't you take her out."

"When she gets to the park, she needs to be carried!"

"You can't carry her?"

"I can't carry her. Ms. Hou's always the one to carry her."

"Then what do we do about lunch?"

"You make it yourself, or you can order something." When she finished, Fang Hui left with Ms. Hou.

Gu Mingxi said, "Dad, I don't need to eat. I still have something to do in the afternoon. Can you take me downtown?"

"This afternoon?" Gu Guoxiang shook his head. "I'm sorry, Mingxi. In the afternoon, I have to go to a meeting. It's very important."

"..." Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then said, "Then I'll go by myself."

He paused and then said, "Dad, it's about time. I should go."

Gu Guoxiang looked at him a bit, and then said, "Let's go, I'll send you."

He drove Gu Mingxi to the bank and took out Li Han's bank card. He went to the counter and added 50 thousand dollars.

When he returned to the car, Gu Guoxiang handed the card back to Gu Mingxi. "I added 50 thousand for now. If your mom still needs money, you can call me. I can send a bit more."

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Thanks, Dad."

"Although what Fang Hui said didn't sound very good, some of it is really true." Gu Guoxiang pushed his glasses back up his nose. "Raising a child takes a lot of money. You can't skimp with their food and clothes. Each month needs at least 10 thousand. And Fang Hui doesn't work. Last year, I gave your mother 650



thousand, so I don't have much left in savings."

Gu Mingxi nodded again. "I know, Dad."

"What time is your train back?"

"Tonight at 7."

"I can pick you up and we can go out for dinner. And then I can send you to the train station."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then shook his head. "No need. I can take care of it on my own."

Gu Guoxiang drove Gu Mingxi back to the city and then he went back. Gu Mingxi carried his backpack, standing on the street and thinking for a long time. He went to the side and gave Pang Shuisheng a phone call.

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Pang Shuisheng hastily hurried over from work. After he saw Gu Mingxi, he gave him a strong embrace. "Rotten kid! How did you get so tan!"

The two of them had lunch at a small shop. Then in the afternoon, Pang Shuisheng went along with Gu Mingxi to sort out Li Han's insurance reimbursement. Gu Mingxi had prepared everything well, so the procedure went smoothly.

After things were taken care of, Pang Shuisheng invited Gu Mingxi over for dinner. Gu Mingxi hesitated for a bit, but finally agreed.

Once again, he returned to the Golden Compound. Rather than the luxurious but strange New Gold Park, this compound was the place that Gu Mingxi dreamed of and missed.

He saw that old bike shed where he and Pang Qian had often stopped at. Their two bikes were still locked up there, though they were covered in a layer of dust now.

The old guard, Old Ceng, was at the gate drinking beer. His hair was entirely white now. When he saw Gu Mingxi, he called out and smiled a toothless smile. "Mingxi's home! But your Fattie's in Shanghai!"

Jin Ai'hua still hadn't returned from work. Pang Shuisheng pulled Mingxi to the



table to chat. When he asked about Li Han's illness, Gu Mingxi answered briefly and simply. Pang Shuisheng told Gu Mingxi to give him Li Han's bank card number, and he would add 20 thousand dollars in a few days. But don't tell Jin Ai'hua about it.

Gu Mingxi quickly refused. Pang Shuisheng pressed down on his shoulders and said, "You took care of Qian Qian so well in the past, and I still haven't had the chance to thank you. Ten years ago, I would never have imagined that our foolish Pang Qian would be able to get into a top university and even study such a popular major."

Gu Mingxi lowered his head. "Uncle, Pang Qian's the one who helped me a lot."

Pang Shuisheng lit a cigarette and then asked, "Did you tell Qian Qian about your coming back this time? Should I give her a call? You didn't contact her during the summer, so she had a grumpy face the whole time. Tell me honestly, do you want to cut off relations with her?"

Gu Mingxi couldn't help laughing. He said, "It's true that I haven't contacted her in a few months. And this time I came back, but I didn't even bring along my phone."

"Mingxi..." Pang Shuisheng looked at Gu Mingxi and his heart hurt terribly. He'd watched this boy grow into an adult. In the past, he'd never really felt that Gu Mingxi suffered much, probably because his family background was good, he wore brand name clothes, and he was an excellent student. But now, Pang Shuisheng looked at Gu Mingxi's slightly lowered head, lackluster eyes, and the two empty sleeves hanging off his thin shoulders, and he could really feel a kind of uselessness, powerlessness, and helplessness exuding from his body.

Pang Shuisheng asked what Gu Mingxi was planning to do next. Gu Mingxi told him about his evening ticket back to Z City. Pang Shuisheng pat his shoulders and said he'd send him to the train station.

When Pang Shuisheng was cooking dinner, Gu Mingxi entered Pang Qian's room. It had some slight changes. Those high school practice books on her bookshelf were replaced by several economics books and some best-selling novels.



Because she wasn't at home, her desk had been tidied up by Jin Ai'hua. On her desk, there was a picture frame with an artsy picture of Pang Qian inside.

A large photo hang on the wall. In the photo, Pang Qian had shoulder-length brown hair and she was wearing a blue-green dress with a pair of heels on her feet. She had on pretty makeup and held a bouquet of white roses as she stood under the setting sun.

Golden light shined off her head. Because of the image editing, her skin was especially white and tender looking, her smile sweet and bright. Gu Mingxi stood in the center of her room and looked at the girl on the wall. That was his Pang Pang. She was already 19 years old. So lively and so beautiful. He imagined her walking down the tree-lined path at school, carrying her books in her arms, silently reading English. Occasionally she would lift her head, revealing a tranquil and satisfied expression.

She was living well in that flourishing city. And he, he'd already gone in the opposite direction to her.

That evening at 5:30, Pang Shuisheng sent Gu Mingxi to the train station.

When they were exiting the compound, he turned around and pointed at the four buildings. "They're probably going to tear down this place."

Gu Mingxi was taken aback, and he asked, "Why?"

"They're building a large commercial center. Ah, over there." Pang Shuisheng pointed to a nearby area, where the metals factory used to be. "The real estate prices here shot up. The land belongs to the metals company, but it seems like a developer has taken a fancy to it. They're currently in negotiations about it. For us, tearing it down is good too. We've already lived here for more than twenty years. Later, we should just buy a great big house."

Gu Mingxi turned to look at the Golden Compound under the sunset. Four six-story buildings stood there quietly. And there was that flower garden, that bike shed, the guard's house... Apt. 501 and 502 were going to disappear. Did that mean that he and Pang Qian were also going to slip apart as well?

After Pang Shuisheng dropped off Gu Mingxi at the train station, he said a few words and then left. Gu Mingxi sat in the waiting room for half an hour when



he suddenly made a decision.

He went to the help desk and asked for a refund on his return ticket to Z City. Then he bought a different ticket to Shanghai.

The train was leaving in fifteen minutes. Gu Mingxi carried his backpack, his ticket in mouth, and ran over to the stop. Finally, sweat dripping down him, he got onto the train.

That night at 10 o'clock, Gu Mingxi stood at the front desk of Pang Qian's dorm, covered in dust. He asked the dorm manager to help him call Pang Qian's room. In the end, she wasn't there.

Her roommate said that she'd gone to watch the basketball game.

Gu Mingxi had rushed over so he was still catching his breath. He stood near the entrance of the dorm and every single girl took note of him. Their faces all showed surprised expression, as they whispered to each other, talking about the boy without any arms.

Gu Mingxi walked over to a wall and dripped his bag to the floor. He rested with his back against the wall. His heart was beating quickly, his eyes fixed on the entrance. He waited quietly, waited for that girl to come back.

The last time he left, he hadn't even met with her. This time, he thought, he definitely had to have a proper farewell with her. To smile slightly and tell her, Pang Pang, goodbye.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 79

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 79 Be There or Be Square (Won't Leave 'Til I See You)

*Ey– Gu Mingxi, you stink!*

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When they exited the basketball venue, Sheng Feng turned to Yang Lu and winked. Immediately picking up on his signal, she pulled the other boy away and said that she wanted to go eat. Then the two of them walked off.

Four people had become two. Pang Qian concentrated on walking, and Sheng Feng caught up to her and said, “The basketball match was really exciting.”

“Ah? Really?” Pang Qian responded frankly, “Actually, I don’t really understand basketball. I just went to increase the fan count in the stands.”

“What about football/soccer?”

“I don’t really like it either. I don’t get it.” Pang Qian smiled. “I like ping pong.”

“I know, I’ve seen you play before. You’re pretty good.” Sheng Feng lifted his wrist and checked his watch. “There’s still some time. Do you want to go get a cup of milk tea? My treat.”

Pang Qian shook her head to Sheng Feng. “It’s okay. I still have to finish my homework for class tomorrow.”

Sheng Feng smiled slightly. “Then I’ll send you back to your dorm.”

In two more days, it would be National Day. When they returned to Pang Qian’s dorm, Sheng Feng asked her, “Are you going home for the long holiday?”

“Yeah.”

“Did you buy your tickets yet?”

“Not yet. I’m going to the train station tomorrow to buy them. I don’t have to



worry about tickets back to E City.”

Sheng Feng said, “I haven’t bought them yet either. Do you want to go together tomorrow?”

Pang Qian looked at him a bit and then said, “Sure. I’ll call you later.”

It was already late night, and there weren’t many girls left on the first floor of the girls’ dorm and the lights were dimmed. A few girls were coming back with their books from the study rooms or the library. And there were some couples holding each other affectionately, unwilling to separate.

Sheng Feng’s face reddened a bit when he saw those couples. Standing in front of Pang Qian, he asked, “Do you have any plans for National Day? If you don’t, then we can hang out together. There are a few new attractions in E City that are supposed to be pretty good.”

“...” Pang Qian scratched her head. “That’s okay. It’s just a few days. I want to spend more time with my parents, and I have to visit my grandparents too.”

“Didn’t you just spend two months with them over the summer?”

Pang Qian couldn’t reply. Sheng Feng had been pursuing her for a year. Yang Lu and Wang Song had already told him Sheng Feng that Pang Qian already had someone she liked. He was somewhere else. But Sheng Feng didn’t believe that such a person existed at all.

Especially in the most recent half year. Even Yang Lu said that Pang Qian hadn’t hidden in her blankets to receive a call in a long time already. Normally, she didn’t text anyone or chat on QQ with anyone. She definitely didn’t video chat with anyone. In any case, it didn’t seem like this boyfriend existed at all.

Yang Lu once asked Pang Qian if she hadn’t planned to visit her boyfriend over the summer. So why didn’t she go? Then Pang Qian’s face turned sour.

Sheng Feng felt that Pang Qian and that boy were either on the verge of breaking up or they had already broken up. Regardless, to him, now was the best chance.

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The wind was a bit chilly outside the dorm. Sheng Feng suddenly pulled the



hood on the back of Pang Qian's clothes and jokingly covered her head with it. The brim covered her eyes so she shouted out, "What are you doing?!"

"Be careful not to catch a cold." Sheng Feng giggled and even pat her head. "Crab, when are you going to stop carrying your shell around me?"

"Have you ever seen a crab without a shell?" Pang Qian pulled her hood off and glared at him. Then she took a step back. Just then, some girls were returning from studying. As they walked past Pang Qian, one of the girls said, "Hey, did that boy have no arms?"

It felt like a bolt of lightening cracked Pang Qian's head, with thunder ringing in her ears. Her heart suddenly started beating crazily. She turned back and saw someone leaning against the wall.

The distant street lights shined on him, causing a long shadow to extend on the ground in front of him.

From start to end, he didn't try to hide. He just stood against the wall as he saw the girl and another boy walking in, talking and laughing. The boy also looked very gentle, and he even affectionately patted her head. His eyes were beaming, enough to reveal his thoughts.

Gu Mingxi didn't know whether or not he should call out to her. So he didn't say anything until Pang Qian turned and started towards him.

Gu Mingxi was surprised at the changes in Pang Qian. She'd died her hair and cut it fashionably with fringe. She also had on light makeup and she wore a loose purple sports hoodie and black pencil pants.

He originally thought that the photo he'd seen of Pang Qian in her room was prettier because it was edited, but seeing her in the flesh, Gu Mingxi realized that his Pang Pang had really become a slender and elegant young woman.

His back facing the wall, he took two steps forward. He tried very hard to smile towards her and said, "Hi, Pang Pang."

Pang Qian's eyes were already red. Hearing his voice, tears welled in her eyes. She ran over to him. In the surprised eyes of the boys and girls at the dorm, she spread her arms and rushed into Gu Mingxi's body, hugging him tightly.



“Gu Mingxi—”

She exerted so much strength when she charged at him that Gu Mingxi nearly lost balance and he swayed a bit. She was already crying loudly into his chest. She cried with such hurt and pain, as if time and space hadn't put a great distance between them, that there was no distance between them. All that existed as a deep longing and missing.

Gu Mingxi stood still, his heart touched. He could feel how strongly Pang Qian felt. How could he not? He couldn't help lowering his head to lay his cheek onto her hair. Pang Qian suddenly turned her head to look up at him, sniffing with her face covered in tears. Her makeup was all messed up too. She sniffed and then said, “Ey— Gu Mingxi, you stink!”

Gu Mingxi's face suddenly turned red. He'd spent an entire night on the train and it had already been two nights since he'd showered. He hadn't shaved, and he hadn't even properly washed his face. His body must have been soaked with smelly sweat. He leaned back and said quietly, “Let go. I'm really dirty.”

“I don't want to!” Pang Qian buried her head in his chest again and tightened her arms. “Gu Mingxi, I missed you to death! You're so heartless! Do you know how many calls and texts I sent you? Why don't you turn on your phone! You gave me a cell phone, but you don't turn yours on. What's that supposed to mean?! (crying sounds...)”

Sheng Feng stood at the side and watched Pang Qian, stupefied. Truth be told, Pang Qian was a pretty extroverted and open girl, but it was still the first time Sheng Feng had seen her lose control of herself this way. She held onto that boy like an octopus. Sheng Feng looked carefully and saw that it really was a boy without arms. He really had a hard time accepting this. He couldn't help calling out to her, “Crab.”

Pang Qian suddenly came back to her senses and remembered that she was at the bottom of the girls' dormitory. She looked around with her red eyes and realized that everyone was really watching them. She wiped away her tears as Sheng Feng walked over beside them. Pang Qian pointed to Gu Mingxi and said, “This is Gu Mingxi. He's... He's... He's my best friend.”

Then she pointed to Sheng Feng and told Gu Mingxi, “This is Sheng Feng.



We're in the same class."

Her eyes were beaming, her face more vivid than ever. Sheng Feng could feel how excited Pang Qian was. He was someone who knew when to stop. He realized that there wasn't anything appropriate for him to say at this point in time. This was a reunion of old friends for Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi. He smiled and gave a greeting, then he told Pang Qian, "See you tomorrow," and left.

After he left, Pang Qian totally let go. She grabbed Gu Mingxi's clothes and looked up at him. It had been a year since she'd seen him. She hadn't even seen any photos. Seeing him now, just like with Pang Shuisheng and Gu Guoxiang, Pang Qian was startled by how dark, thin, and scruffy Gu Mingxi had become.

"Have you been digging up coal?!" Pang Qian even reached out to stroke his face. Her fingers brushed over the stubble on his chin. "Why have you gotten so thin?! Don't you eat?! And you're so tanned! Why did you cut your hair?! It doesn't look good at all! Gu Mingxi, what are you doing here? Are you coming back for National Day? Are you coming back to E City?"

She asked a whole chain of questions, her eyes unable to leave his face. She started crying again. "I thought I wouldn't be able to find you. I even told my dad that I would go to Z City over National Day to find you at school."

Gu Mingxi smiled. "Don't cry. I was just in E City to take care of some things. On the way back to Z City, I decided to pass by Shanghai. I wanted to come see you."

"When are you going back to Z City?" Pang Qian immediately stopped crying and stared at him.

"Tomorrow..."

Without hesitation, she cried out, "Get a refund!"

"Ah?"

"Stay in Shanghai for a few days, Gu Mingxi. Please, don't leave so fast." Pang Qian tugged at his shirt and continued swaying side to side. "We're on holiday the day after tomorrow. I have time, I won't go home. I'll stay in Shanghai so we can hang out. Our school has guest housing, and it's very nice. If you think it's not convenient to stay there on your own, I can stay with you..."



“Pang Pang,” he cut off her bold idea. “I’m sleeping over at Shark’s place tonight. I already contacted him.”

“Don’t go tomorrow...” Pang Qian’s voice choked. She grabbed onto his collar with hands. “Gu Mingxi, don’t go. Stay here for two more days, just two more days.”

Seeing her cry like this, he finally gave in. “Okay, okay, I won’t leave tomorrow. Don’t cry.”

A smile suddenly broke through Pang Qian’s tears, her eyes shining as she looked at him.

She walked him out to hail down a taxi. On their way out, she kept holding onto the hem of his t-shirt.

“Why do you keep pulling on my shirt?” Gu Mingxi asked.

“I want to!” Pang Qian pouted and kept swaying beside him. “Who told you to keep disappearing. I don’t want to let go. I’m scared that once I let go, you’ll just *bang*, and disappear in a puff of smoke.”

Gu Mingxi laughed gently. Pang Qian asked, “Gu Mingxi, has your mom gotten better?”

Now that his mother had been brought up, his heart suddenly grew heavy. He didn’t want Pang Qian to worry though, so he just said simply, “She’s a lot better.”

Seeing that he didn’t want to say more, Pang Qian didn’t ask any further. They’d already made their way to the school gate. Pang Qian said, “Gu Mingxi, tomorrow at 8:30 AM, let’s meet back here, okay?”

“Where do you want to go?” Gu Mingxi asked. “You don’t have class?”

“I don’t have class tomorrow morning. I’ll take you out someplace,” Pang Qian said. “Just promise. I’ll be waiting at the gate tomorrow at 8:30. Be there or be square.”

She stared at him until Gu Mingxi finally nodded, “I promise.”

“If you don’t come, I’ll be hit by a car on my way out!” She called out.



“Pang Pang!” Gu Mingxi frowned at her. “Don’t say nonsense.”

“I just want you to know that you have to come.” Pang Qian clutched onto his shirt tightly. She lowered her head, “Gu Mingxi, you must come.”

He looked at her silently, finally nodding again. “I’ll definitely come.”

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Gu Mingxi took a taxi back to Shark’s place. Shark opened a barbecue place in Pudong District, and the business was pretty good. He also had a girlfriend who was living with him.

Gu Mingxi had been in touch with Shark the whole time. That night, the two of them who were finally meeting up again in a long time drank some dozen bottles of beer, and finally ended up sleeping on the floor of his living room.

At 6 AM, Gu Mingxi opened his eyes, lying on the freezing cold floor. He sat up and felt that his head was kind of itchy. He lowered his head and sniffed the sour smell from his body. That’s when he realized that he hadn’t bathed in a long time.

His never before sloppiness made him laugh. He looked around and saw Shark sleeping on his back beside him. Gu Mingxi stood up and pulled out a change of clothes from his bag. He piled the clothes onto his shoulder, then pulled out his back scratcher and walked into the bathroom.

In the mirror, he saw a young man with puffy eyes, greasy hair, stubble all across his chin, and a white t-shirt that was wrinkled like a pickle, after being worn for several days and nights.

Gu Mingxi took a deep breath as he looked at the image in the mirror. He sat down on the toilet lid, bent over, and pulled his shirt off from the collar with his toes. He leaned over the sink and brushed his teeth, washed his face, shaved, and then stepped into the shower before carefully washing. Then he changed into a clean pair of underpants, a sky-blue short sleeved shirt, and beige trousers. He stood in front of the mirror and looked at himself again. He finally felt very refreshed.

Shark’s girlfriend, Xiao Le, had already woken Shark up, and she was currently in the kitchen making breakfast for the two boys. Wearing just a pair of



underpants, Shark ran over to the bathroom. When he saw Gu Mingxi, he quipped, “Ey, looking good.”

He put some gel into Gu Mingxi’s hair. “You going on a date with Little Crab today?”

“...” Gu Mingxi’s face reddened. Shark helped him pull up his hair and then neatened up his shirt. He said, “Kid, don’t think about your mom’s sickness for today. It’s been a long time since you’ve seen Little Crab, so just have fun. Be happy. Got me?”

He gave Gu Mingxi a strong pat on his back and then stuffed a few hundred bucks into Gu Mingxi’s pant’s pocket. “I should be acting as your host now that you’re here in Shanghai, but I can’t interrupt your date with Crab. So your activities today are on me. Don’t leave any money. Whatever Crab wants to eat or do, just go along with her.

Gu Mingxi just looked at him, but he didn’t refuse. He said, “Thanks, Shark.”

When he saw it was about time, Shark drove Gu Mingxi to the front gate of SHUFE.

It was 8:20 AM. The road in front of SHUFE was congested with cars and people were hurrying past. Pang Qian walked out from the school gates, feeling some ill at ease, when she suddenly heard a familiar voice.

“Pang Pang.”

She jerked her head back and saw his smiling face.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 80

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 80 Gentle and Cautious

*Whether it was ten years ago, or ten years later, you didn't forget to take me along in your dreams. Thank you.*

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Pang Qian happily ran over to Gu Mingxi. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail, she wasn't wearing any makeup, and she wore a simple pink t-shirt, jeans, and white sneakers. A small purse hung from her shoulder. She opened her hands for Gu Mingxi to see, "Look, I didn't bring my phone. Today, no one will be able to bother us."

Gu Mingxi said, "Don't you still have class in the afternoon?"

"I'm a good student, and I don't usually skip class. Nothing will happen if I skip just once." She giggled. "I asked Yang Lu to help me ask for time off. It's fine."

Seeing a strange look in Gu Mingxi's eyes, Pang Qian said, "Don't look at me like that. I'm sure that you never skip class, but I'll have you know, skipping class in college once in awhile isn't a big deal."

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "Mm, I know."

He hadn't told Gu Guoxiang or Pang Shuisheng about him withdrawing from school, and he didn't plan on telling Pang Qian. He'd only told Shark, who was understanding of his situation.

With regards to his future, Gu Mingxi was a bit confused. But more than that, he was too busy with other concerns. He was much more worried about his mother's condition. This was the most important thing in front of him. The doctor said that Li Han might recover, and as long as there was even the thinnest thread of hope, Gu Mingxi wouldn't let go.

He asked Pang Qian, "Pang Pang, where do you want to go?"



Pang Qian curled her lips and said, “Why are you making it seem like you’re the host? You’re clearly the one in my territory right now! I should be the one asking you. Gu Mingxi, where do you want to go?”

He couldn’t help laughing. He said, “I’ve seen most of the highlights of Shanghai.”

Pang Qian said, “But I still have a lot of places I haven’t seen, like the Oriental Pearl Tower.”

Gu Mingxi was surprised. “You’ve been in Shanghai for a year, and you still haven’t gone to see the Oriental Pearl Tower?”

“I wanted to go with you,” Pang Qian said quietly. “When we came to Shanghai in junior high, you said you would take me there, but then we didn’t end up going. After I got to Shanghai, the whole class went to see it, but I still didn’t go.”

“...” Gu Mingxi saw her childlike expression and said, “Then, let’s go see the Oriental Pearl Tower.”

Several years ago, when he and Pang Qian came to Shanghai for the comic convention, Gu Mingxi had prepared a map in advance and carefully studied the roads they would take. But now, he didn’t need to worry about those things since Pang Qian knew all about Shanghai. She led him to the bus, where they sat for several stops, before getting to the Jiangwan stop on Line 3 of the metro.

Note: Accuracy in no way guaranteed for the following paragraph, since I don’t know Shanghainese.

Along the way, Pang Qian chattered to Gu Mingxi and even mimicked the Shanghai dialect for him to see. “*Ala shanghai ning* (I’m from Shanghai).” “*Wu tong ni yibadao baixiang* (I’ll take you out to play).” “*Jinchao tianqi jiao guanhao* (The weather’s really nice today).” “*Nong xiang nanengah* (Where do you want to go)?” ...When she saw Gu Mingxi’s dumbfounded expression, Pang Qian covered her mouth and kept laughing.

“Yang Lu taught me. She said that if I was going to stay in Shanghai to work, I should learn some Shanghainese.”

Gu Mingxi asked, “You’re not going back to E City after graduation?”



Pang Qian smiled. "I will. My parents won't let me stay in Shanghai to work. But I've thought about working in Shanghai for two years first. Jobs in my field are easier to find in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. I'm worried that if I head back to E City, I might not be able to find a good job to start out. If I start working in Shanghai for two years first, I can change jobs and get a better salary."

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood at the metro station, waiting for Line 3. The station was elevated, and outside the glass windows, you could see the pale blue sky. Pang Qian looked out the window at the white clouds in the sky and asked the person beside her, "Gu Mingxi, what do you plan to do after graduating? Will you go on to postgraduate studies? Or if you're working, which city do you want to go to? If you're studying, are you staying at B University or will you go somewhere else?"

This was a difficult question for Gu Mingxi to answer. Pang Qian asked in great detail, so he couldn't even just answer roughly. He just bit the bullet and said, "I'll probably keep going to school. As for where I'm going to study, I don't know for now."

"I want to keep studying too, but one of the older girls I know told me that if it's possible, it would be best to work for two years first. And then if I'm not satisfied with things at work, I can choose to do postgraduate studies in some field that will be helpful for my career. That would be more useful than going straight into postgrad studies right after graduating. She also worked a bit before she went back to school. She even plans on studying abroad for her postgrad. So cool!"

As she kept talking on, she realized that Gu Mingxi was zoning out. Pang Qian leaned over and tapped him on the shoulder. She said, "What, you think all the stuff I'm saying is boring? This is what the students usually talk about. After all, we're already in our second year of college, I..."

She suddenly blushed. Quietly, she said, "I've wondered before, which city you'll stay at in the future. Actually, I really want you to come to Shanghai for your postgraduate studies."

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and looked over at her, but he didn't say anything.



There were a lot of people on the metro. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood in the corner as the train car swayed slightly. Gu Mingxi leaned back against the wall of the car, and she stood in front of him, her arm gently wrapped around his waist.

Anyone who saw the two of them would think they were a pair of lovers. They looked very close. Pang Qian gently rested her head on Gu Mingxi's chest, and said in a voice that only he could hear, "Gu Mingxi, you're not stinky today. You smell really nice."

He smiled quietly and bumped his chin onto the top of her head.

They transferred to Line 1 and got off the metro at Lujiazui (area in Shanghai). Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi headed up to the [Pearl of the Orient Tower](#).

Under the white clouds and blue sky, the tall and imposing broadcast tower looked very grand. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi got onto the elevator to head up. This was the fastest elevator she'd ever ridden in her entire life. As the elevator whooshed up, she stood close to Gu Mingxi. She closed her eyes in fright and even gave out a startled cry.

The elevator was full of people so Gu Mingxi chided her, "Your friends are all braver than you."

Pang Qian turned to the side unsatisfied. Two 7 or 8 year old kids were indeed watching her with a curious look.

Gu Mingxi had gone up the tower before with his parents, when he was in primary school. Almost ten years had already passed since then. It was the first time for Pang Qian. When they reached the second sphere, she glued herself to the glass window and called down to the cars and pedestrians down below, as excited as a little kid.

Rows upon rows of tall buildings, boats traveling to and fro across the peacefully flowing Huangpu River. Gu Mingxi stood beside Pang Qian at the window. Even with the bustling Shanghai scenery beneath him, he only had eyes for the twinkling, smiling girl beside him.

Pointing to the Jinmao Tower, Pang Qian said to Gu Mingxi, "I'm going to work in that building in the future!"



Gu Mingxi, “Ah...”

Then she pointed to several other buildings, “That place is okay too, and that one’s not bad! Ah, that one doesn’t look good. Who designed it? It’s so ugly!” She turned to him, face glowing. “Gu Mingxi, Lujiazui is the financial district of Shanghai, and Shanghai’s the economic hub of China. My dream is to work here one day! Make big money! Buy a big house!”

When she finished, she laughed happily. “Gu Mingxi, when I hit it big, don’t hesitate to ask me for help!”

Gu Mingxi blinked his eyes, and then asked, “Do you still remember your dream from ten years ago?”

“Ten years ago? When I was 9?” How would Pang Qian remember. She shook her head. “I don’t remember. Did I tell you?”

“Mm. You went to a street vendor to buy some food. You told me you only had 50 cents, and you couldn’t afford a skewer of fried pork fillet, so you could only buy fried millet cake,” Gu Mingxi recalled. “And then you said your dream was to have lots of money in the future so that you could buy lots of fried pork fillet. If you didn’t finish eating, you’d invite me over.”

Pang Qian was dumbfounded. “Ah...”

Gu Mingxi laughed happily, his shoulders shaking. He asked, “Do you still want to eat fried pork fillet?”

She whacked him, “So annoying!”

“Pang Pang,” he suddenly said gently. “Thank you.”

Pang Qian was very surprised, “Ah? For what?”

He said, “Whether it was ten years ago, or ten years later, you didn’t forget to take me along in your dreams. Thank you.”

When they got back down from the Oriental Pearl Tower, it was still early. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian took a walk around the ocean aquarium. Pang Qian bought two key-chains as souvenirs. A very interesting red, cartoon crab.

They found a restaurant nearby Lujiazui. Gu Mingxi had to use the restroom urgently, so Pang Qian calmly accompanied him to the restroom to help him



relieve himself.

This was the second time she'd helped him to the bathroom, but for some reason, she didn't feel at all awkward or embarrassed. She tried not to look down and just relied on her hands. Without any fabric in the way, her hands inevitably touched him there. With her body stuck close to his, her fingers held onto his little birdie as she heard the rustling sound of flowing water.

Pang Qian felt very calm. She looked up at Gu Mingxi but was met with a very chaotic face. Their eyes met and he turned away, his eyes bright red. Then Pang Qian's face finally started burning.

When they were eating, Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Didn't you come to Shanghai with your parents once to get prosthetics?"

"Ah? Mm..." They ordered two plates of Indonesian fried rice. Gu Mingxi picked up his spoon with his foot to eat. "In fifth grade. We came to Shanghai to get the custom order."

Pang Qian asked, "So what happened with the prosthetics?"

"Weren't you the one who said they were disgusting? I didn't wear them after that." Gu Mingxi laughed. "I haven't seen them since we moved. We probably threw it away. For things like that, you have to keep making them as your body grows. It's really expensive."

Pang Qian hesitated for a bit, and then said, "Gu Mingxi, it's already been more than ten years. Science has advanced a lot. Have there been any new developments in prosthetics?"

"Probably. They've constantly been researching it overseas," Gu Mingxi said indifferently.

Pang Qian's eyes widened. "Then have you ever thought about getting a set of arms that you can do things with?"

Gu Mingxi lifted his head and looked at her. He said, "Pang Pang, I don't plan to get prosthetics. Let me put it this way. Whatever I'll be able to do with prosthetic arms, I'll be able to do with my legs as well. Even things I can't do with the prosthetics, I can probably do them with my legs. Whatever I can't do, I still won't be able to do even with prosthetic arms."



“...” Pang Qian lowered her head disappointed and continued to eat her rice gloomily.

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, “Don’t be like that. Aren’t I fine right now?”

Pang Qian glanced up at him and curled her lips unhappily.

In the afternoon, they took a walk along Riverside Avenue. The sky was blue with some clouds, and the air was fresh and clean. On the hills beside the platforms over the water, the beautiful green landscape separated them from the hustle and bustle of the big city. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi leaned against the railing and looked over to the elegant buildings that overlooked the Puxi Bund and the perpetually moving boats across the Huangpu River. Neither of them spoke, just enjoying this comfortable and calm feeling.

As the early autumn wind blew, Pang Qian felt deeply satisfied. She glanced to the profile beside her. Although he’d gotten thinner and tanned, his facial features still revealed a certain determination, and his eyes carried a power that was hard to shake. In Pang Qian’s eyes, he was ever more masculine than before.

Her heart started to thump and thump. Pang Qian slowly moved closer to Gu Mingxi, her finger tracing his empty shirt sleeve.

As if they were holding hands, she felt a bit of joy. Pang Qian looked over at him again, but his head was lowered, a loneliness revealed in his eyes.

Pang Qian had never asked him directly, but she felt that she’d been very obvious in her actions. Pang Qian had been so expressive, but she was still a girl. She hoped that Gu Mingxi would be able to stir up their relationship.

On the other hand, Pang Qian felt a bit concerned about Yang Lu’s words. She and Gu Mingxi were indeed strange. Usually, his response was very disorderly. He didn’t carry his phone most of the time, and Pang Qian just couldn’t contact him at all. Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi had feelings for her, and she had feelings for him. But at this time, she really couldn’t be sure what kind of “liking” Gu Mingxi felt for her now.

If he really liked her enough, shouldn’t he want to spend all his time contacting her? Texting, calling, QQ, emailing, video chatting... There were so many ways to contact someone instantly in today’s world. How could he disappear for several



months without any news?

It's only because Pang Qian understood Gu Mingxi too well, so she didn't get angry at him. If it were any other girl, who would be able to stand a boy ignoring her this way?

And most importantly, Pang Qian had asked Gu Mingxi many times about his plans after graduation. But even until today, he still hadn't given her a concrete answer.

Pang Qian couldn't go to Z City. She was studying finance. If she went to a small northern city, she couldn't be able to find a suitable job. She thought, if Gu Mingxi could concretely tell her that he would come to Shanghai for his postgraduate studies, then she would have the confidence to persist on.

In the future, whether in Shanghai, back in E City, or to Beijing or Guangzhou, she would be able to stay with him.

Pang Qian bit her lip, fingers tugging on Gu Mingxi's shirt sleeve. He turned to look at her, his dark eyes looking right into her soul. Pang Qian said, "Will you stay in Z City for the next New Year's?"

Gu Mingxi nodded.

"Can I come to visit?" she asked, gently and cautiously.

Gu Mingxi reflexively said, "Winters in Z City are really cold. It's better if you don't come."

"..." Pang Qian said, "I want to go in the winter because I've never seen the snow in the north."

"Really, it won't be comfortable for you," Gu Mingxi said. "Or why don't you come the year after."

"What about next summer?" Pang Qian looked up at him, watching. "Can I come next summer?"

She asked very aggressively and Gu Mingxi gulped. In a heavy tone, he said, "Let's talk about it again when the time comes."

"Gu Mingxi..." Pang Qian lowered her head. "Don't act like this. Between us... In any case, don't think about too many things, and don't worry about anything."



I hope that... I hope that... I hope that you can come to Shanghai to study. Really. As long as you come to Shanghai to study, I promise that I'll stay in Shanghai with you."

Gu Mingxi couldn't keep talking about this topic. He suddenly said, "Last night, that Sheng Feng guy, is he pursuing you?"

"Ah?" Pang Qian's mouth dropped. "He... He is pursuing me, so what? I don't like him anyway."

"Actually, Pang Pang..." He became emotional as he said, "You can try to accept him. Not dating in college would be too boring."

Pang Qian's mind went *boom!* Her expression immediately changed, and then she said, "Gu Mingxi, let's go back."

It was just afternoon. On the metro ride back, Pang Qian leaned against Gu Mingxi's shoulder and slept. Gu Mingxi sat stiffly, his heart very heavy.

This was a very happy day. It had been a long time since he'd gone out and had such fun. But he was dejected to find that there were several topics that he couldn't talk about with Pang Qian.

Her life was as wonderful as he had imagined. The Pang Qian who had stumbled through high school was now studying well in college. She did well on her homework, she got along with others, and her campus life was colorful. She told Gu Mingxi that she'd joined the school's ping pong team. Even a dabbler like herself was able to get to the third round of Shanghai's college table tennis competition.

Her classmates often discussed their plans for the future, whether they'd go to graduate school or go abroad. Pang Qian didn't dare imagine going abroad. Even if she could apply for a scholarship, it would be hard for her family to be able to afford the high living costs. Pang Qian had mentioned to Gu Mingxi numerous times about postgraduate studies, as if it would be a matter of course for her.

How could she find out that the boy beside her didn't know when he'd be able to return to school. In fact, he might not ever return.

Advertisement

When they exited the metro station, Gu Mingxi saw a movie theater. He



suddenly said, “Pang Pang, let’s go watch a movie.”

Pang Qian said, “Oh, okay. Harry Potter 3 is out right now, and I’ve been wanting to watch it.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“Have you seen the first two?”

He shook his head.

“Have you read the books?”

He shook his head again. Pang Qian shrugged and then indifferently continued on. “Then we can watch Jackie Chan’s Police Story.”

When they went to buy tickets, the ticket lady said that the only seats available were the front-most ones or the couple seats in the back. Pang Qian said, “The couple seats then. Your neck hurts if you sit right in front.”

After they got their tickets, she went to buy drinks and popcorn. Gu Mingxi saw how gloomy she looked and his mood dropped as well.

It was the first time that Pang Qian sat in the couples seats at the movie theater. Sitting together with Gu Mingxi, she grew very curious.

“These seats are really comfy.” She smiled and then brought the cola in front of Gu Mingxi. He obediently took a sip, and then she grabbed some popcorn for him to eat.

After the movie started, the lights in the theater turned off. The audio in the film was very good, pounding at the audience’s ears and hearts.

Gu Mingxi’s nerves gradually settled. Inside this dark theater, he finally let down his defenses. Sitting lazily in his chair, he took in the familiarity of the girl beside him. She was eating popcorn, and didn’t forget to bring some up to his mouth as well. Occasionally she drank some cola and swallowed it with a gulp...

Gu Mingxi didn’t know what was going on in the movie at all. He just shifted slightly and moved closer to her. He thanked the person who designed these couple seats, and then closed his eyes and gently inhaled the scent of her hair.

Pang Qian wouldn’t know that this was the last opportunity Gu Mingxi was



giving himself to indulge a little. He indulged in being close to her, forgetting all the troubles on his mind. His mother's illness, the expensive treatment fees, his terrible school situation, the bleak little city, his unreasonable relatives, the house he couldn't return to, his middle-aged father and second wife...

For just awhile, he left Z City, left those people and those things. Gu Mingxi admitted that he'd relaxed a bit, but a responsibility still weighed down on his shoulders. No matter how pleasurable and glamorous the world outside was, he had to return home and return to his mother's side.

At some point in their lives, people must learn to let go, to compromise. As Gu Mingxi was faced with his unpredictable future, he wondered if maybe he should let go of his little crab.

The movie was already 40 minutes in, and Pang Qian was entirely entranced by it. She brought some popcorn to her mouth, and then she brought some up to Gu Mingxi.

It was very dark, and she didn't turn, but she was thoroughly surprised.

The back of her index finger felt the edge of his mouth, near his cheek. Fingers were very sensitive, so even though it was just a brief moment, she felt that beside his lips were slightly damp.

Pang Qian turned her head, the popcorn falling from her hands. Her fingers touched his cheek again, but this time he moved his head away. Pang Qian's heart was beating wildly, and then she brought her fingers to his eyes.

He didn't give her the opportunity to keep exploring, immediately pulling his head away from her hand and lowering it. He bowed his head down deeply. Pang Qian slowly pulled her neck down and brought her head to the same level as his.

Their breathing was light as they breathed toward each other's faces, carrying the scent of popcorn. Gu Mingxi lifted his head and brought his lips to her eyebrow. His Adam's apple slid as he closed his eyes and gently pressed his lips on her face.

A slight warm and wet sensation landed on her silently. Pang Qian still held the container of popcorn in her left hand, her right hand holding its original position resting on his shoulder. She curled up her fingers and slowly grabbed his collar.



And then Gu Mingxi's lips approached her and landed on her cheek.

Pang Qian's face was already burning, but she didn't hide. Gu Mingxi's kisses were gently and cautious. He kissed her nose and then the two of them froze.

The two of them gasped deeply, both able to hear the other's heart beating. Pang Qian pressed her fingers against his neck, the veins there pulsing, blazing like they'd burn through into her bloodstream.

Pang Qian didn't move, she didn't hide, and she didn't go along with him. Finally, Gu Mingxi stirred. He searched, as if looking for the world's greatest treasure. Then he slowly lowered his head, his cold lips touching her warm ones. In that moment, the rest of the world ceased to exist.

The rest of the popcorn in Pang Qian's hand dropped to the floor. The crashing popcorn box startled the couple beside them, who glanced curiously at their neighbor before returning their eyes to the movie screen.

Pang Qian's arms circled his neck, her leg raised up on top of his. She raised her chin, eyes closed, and accepted his unbridled kiss.

He did all he could to move closer to her, his shoulders extending. Pang Qian's fingers moved down his neck to his shoulders and grabbed onto his shirt. Without restraint, she held onto his cut-off shoulders. She even pinched him with her nails, which brought out a repressed moan from his throat and another wave of frantic kissing.

She felt his warm and wet tears fall onto her cheek, drop by drop, without a sound. She couldn't help but cup his cheek and wipe away his tears with trembling fingers.

In the end, his kiss grew gentle. He kissed her lips lightly and sucked onto her tongue as their faces collided together. His eyes were closed the whole time, his long eyelashes sprinkling tears across her cheeks. It was itchy, but it made her own tears fall.

She choked, unable to stop herself. Her body shook, and she helped him wipe away the tears at his eyes. In the darkness, Gu Mingxi finally opened his eyes. His eyes were watery and gentle. Like the brightest stars in the sky, they quietly stared into her eyes.







# Chapter 81

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 81 Two Trains

*Pang Pang, can you hug me for a moment?*

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Despite his years, Jackie Chan was jumping over obstacles and fighting for his life on the screen. Crashes and explosions sounded down to Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi's ears, but it was as if they couldn't hear it. Throughout the second half of the movie, Pang Qian kept holding onto Gu Mingxi's waist, her head cradled in his arms, as she stared into the distance. The two of them didn't speak until the movie ended.

When they left the movie theater, the sun was setting in the west. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian stood on the sidewalk, not too far from the metro station. Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, it's pretty late. I have to go."

Pang Qian grabbed onto his shirt, but couldn't find a reason to make him stay. She said, "Let's have dinner together."

Gu Mingxi said, "No need. The holiday starts tomorrow, aren't you going home?"

Pang Qian immediately shook her head. She looked at him and said, "It's okay if I don't go back. Gu Mingxi, are you going to stay in Shanghai tomorrow? If you stay, we can go to Zhouzhuang or Xitang (water towns). They're both pretty close."

He didn't say anything for a long time. Then he said, "Okay, let's have dinner. Can we go back to your school to eat? I want to eat at your school's cafeteria."

Pang Qian nodded. "Mm, our cafeteria has really good food."

On their way back to her school, the sky darkened. It was the day before the long holiday, so a lot of students from Shanghai and nearby towns were heading



back home. There were a lot of students with some luggage walking around the campus. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked very slowly, and she gave him a tour of the things they saw along the way.

SHUFE's campus was small, with narrow roads and old buildings. But it was very clean, elegant, and tranquil. The trees were flourishing, the grass was green, the lake was clear. It was all very tasteful.

When they reached the [“aim for the sky” statue](#), Gu Mingxi stopped in his steps. The statue wasn't very large. On top of a stone, there was an eagle with its wings spread wide. He turned his head up to look at that eagle until Pang Qian said, “Hurry, the cafeteria will be out of food if we're too late.” Gu Mingxi pulled back his gaze.

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Most of the buildings at SHUFE had gray walls with red tiles. The cafeteria was no different. The cafeteria was very large. When Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi headed inside, they caught a number of eyes.

Pang Qian ordered two meals. Sweet and sour ribs, stir-fried cabbage, spicy chicken, and eggplant with black bean sauce. Then she also ordered two fried eggs for Gu Mingxi.

After ordering a big meal, she said, “You're too thin, you should eat more. The next time I see you, you have to gain some weight.”

At the table, Pang Qian brought chopsticks and pulled out wet napkins from her bag. She sat down next to Gu Mingxi and helped him clean his feet.

Someone walked past them, and when they saw Pang Qian, they gave a greeting. “Crab, you didn't go home?”

Pang Qian looked up and smiled. “Mm, my friend came to see me, so we're going to hang out for a few days.”

The person glanced over to Gu Mingxi and asked with a strange tone, “Boyfriend?”

Pang Qian blinked her eyes and said, “Is there a reason he can't be?”

Gu Mingxi listened to their conversation, and waited until the person left



before lifting his foot up to the table. He picked up his chopsticks and started eating.

Pang Qian kept adding food to his meal box from her own. She said, "Try this, it's really good."

"I have enough. You should eat some."

"I'm losing weight."

"You're already thin, why do you need to lose weight?" Gu Mingxi frowned and looked at her. "Girls shouldn't just casually lose weight. It's not healthy."

"I know, you're so annoying." Pang Qian said that, but a smile was plastered to her face. She asked Gu Mingxi, "Is our cafeteria's food tasty?"

"Yeah."

"Does the food at B University taste good?"

"..." Gu Mingxi had eaten from the cafeteria a few times. He shook his head. "Not really."

"No wonder you've gotten so thin. Don't be picky." Pang Qian became antsy. "Even if you don't like to eat it, you should still eat it."

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at her and smiled. "I know. I'll make sure to eat well."

Pang Qian smiled. She pouted and asked, "So about what I said earlier. Let's go to Zhouzhuang. I've never been there."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then nodded, "Mm."

Pang Qian bit her chopsticks and smiled happily. "Then it's set."

After they ate dinner, the sky was entirely dark. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were walking leisurely around the campus. For the first time, Gu Mingxi brought up Pang Qian's studies. He said, "I thought about what you said, wanting to work for two years after graduation before going back to study some more. It makes a lot of sense, but wouldn't that be harder to get into the school program later? Your school has more students who go straight into postgraduate studies. Why don't you try to get a research position?"



“I’m considering it for my major,” Pang Qian said. “You should know, the kind of work you do depends on your major, and the salary is really different. At the time, I just picked whatever undergraduate major to study, I didn’t really understand it much then. If I’m going to study more later, I should understand the field of study a bit more. I’m not just studying it to get the degree. Gu Mingxi, do you know. The girl I mentioned, the one who came back to study, she used to work for one of the big four (Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG) and her salary was more than 200 thousand. But after she finishes her postgrad, she said it could jump up to 500 thousand. And if she goes to study in the US, ah, I don’t even dare to imagine!”

“Mm, you really did consider a lot.” Gu Mingxi nodded, and then he smiled. “Pang Pang, you’re very good now.”

“?” Pang Qian didn’t understand. “What’s very good?”

He said, “Everything. Serious, hardworking, forging forward. You don’t just think about eating and drinking anymore. You can think about your future now.”

Pang Qian beat him. “What do you mean eat and drink! You think I’m a pig?!”

Oddly enough, Gu Mingxi didn’t try to dodge her attacks like he would have in the past. Pang Qian’s fist really hit his body. “Ah!” she cried, before quickly massaging him. “You idiot, why didn’t you move.”

He smiled and his two canine teeth slipped out. “It’s been more than a year since you’ve hit me. I’m happy to take it.”

She unhappily cried out, “Who was hitting you?!”

They headed out to the school gate, the place they’d met up at in the morning. Under the streetlights, Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian’s face. There were a lot of things he wanted to say to her, but he didn’t know how he could start.

He wanted to tell her not to stay up late. Sleeping and waking up earlier was good for your health.

He wanted to tell her not to eat too much from the street food stalls. Those foods weren’t healthy. Of course, having a bite every now and then was okay. Also, don’t eat too many sweets, because you’re more likely to get cavities and it affects your body too.



He wanted to tell her that over the holidays, don't eat very cold or spicy foods, or your stomach will hurt a lot. Drink a bit of warm brown sugar water and don't cause any trouble.

He wanted to tell her that her parents were getting older, so she should learn some things. Don't talk back to your parents when you go home, and help them with the house chores. You never know if they'll suddenly just fall down one day.

He wanted to tell her that if there was a decent guy pursuing her that she could try going on a date with him. You're almost 20 years old, your parents won't say anything about it. Of course, as a girl, you have to be smart with these things and protect yourself.

He wanted to tell her, Pang Qian, you're a really good girl. You love life so much, of course things will work out for you later. You will have a happy and fulfilling life, a wonderful family, a desirable job, a healthy body, and lastly, a simple and joyous heart.

You'll have a busy job, but you'll have two weeks off to go on vacation with your husband and child. You'll have a table full of makeup and a closet full of beautiful clothes and shoes. You'll have your own circle of friends, your own best friends, and you'll go for walks on the weekends, go out to eat, play a few games of ping pong.

You'll have a large house, a duplex or even a townhouse. You'll raise a dog, plant lots of flowers, and when the sun shines into your room, you'll wrap your arms around your pillow and sit on the floor to happily play with your child.

...

He wanted to tell her a lot of things, but in the end, he only said one thing, "Pang Pang, can you hug me for a moment?"

How could Pang Qian leave him disappointed? She opened her arms and wrapped them around him, her heart happy and complete. She could smell his familiar scent, and with her face against his chest, she felt the warmth of his body. She said, "Tomorrow morning at 8:30, right here. Let's meet for sure."

Gu Mingxi closed his eyes and rested his chin on her head as he said, "But you can't promise your life on it again (last time, she said she'd get run over by a car



if he didn't show up)."

"Mm!" She was very at ease, a big grin on her face.

Finally, Pang Qian released her hold and sent him to a taxi. Gu Mingxi sat in the backseat and watched Pang Qian smile and wave at him, "Gu Mingxi, see you tomorrow."

"Pang Pang, goodbye." He looked at her and curved his lips up into an especially good looking smile.

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Shark sent Gu Mingxi to the train station and gave him his sleeper ticket.

Before he left, he said, "Are you sure you're going to cut off contact from Little Crab?"

Gu Mingxi nodded. "She and I... We're not really anything. To be honest, I was really worried about her at first. I was worried that without me by her side, she'd get bullied by others. But I realize now that in this past year, she's been doing really well, much better than I'd imagined. I didn't give her enough credit. She's a smart girl. She knows how to take care of herself and how to fight for the things she wants. So I think that I can leave without any worries."

Shark didn't understand, "That doesn't mean you have to stop contacting her. You can always still be friends."

"Shark, let me give you an analogy." Gu Mingxi turned to look at him and said calmly, "Pang Qian and I, we're two trains on different tracks. In the past, I was a bit faster than her. Since we were both moving forward, she could never catch up to me. So sometimes I would stop to wait for her. Then one day, we came to a fork in the road. There was nothing we could do but continue on our own paths. I kept telling myself that as we headed forward, I might still be able to meet with her somewhere along the way. And then we could both move forward on our tracks together. Maybe she thought the same way too. But as time passed and we kept moving forward, we realized that the tracks we were moving on didn't turn back. They only went straight, moving forward in two different directions. The further we move forward, the further apart we would get. And her speed kept growing faster, while mine got slower and slower. I realized that even if I could break the train track and make it turn to go in the same direction as her, I



probably... wouldn't be able to catch up."

Shark, "..."

"Ahead of her, there will be many other trains that she can travel the same journey with. If I stay behind her, dragging her down, she'll always feel a bit reluctant. It will affect the progress of her own journey. So I felt that it would be best to just cut off contact with her."

Shark asked, "Then what if one day, you were able to catch up?"

"If such a day really comes..." Gu Mingxi smiled and shook his head. "I don't even dare to dream of it. I still have to figure out how to get my mom better and more reliable treatment."

Shark sent Gu Mingxi to the station's entrance and he gave the young man a hug. "I promise you that I won't disclose your whereabouts to Crab, but you have to promise that you won't cut off contact with me. If you run into troubles, make sure to call me."

Gu Mingxi nodded, "I promise."

Shark gave Gu Mingxi a pat on the back. "That's good. Kid, have a safe journey. Take care of yourself."

---

Pang Qian was excited all night and couldn't sleep. She grabbed Yang Lu and talked to her for half the night. "I'm in love."

When morning came, Pang Qian got dressed nicely. It was the 55th anniversary of the founding of the nation (PRC was formed in 1949), a time to celebrate. Pang Qian wore a pretty dress and headed to the school gate. She was smugly wearing a straw hat, the crab keychains she'd bought the previous day hanging on her bag. She originally wanted to give one to Gu Mingxi and keep one for herself, but he was in a rush to leave so she'd forgotten.

But Gu Mingxi didn't show up. She only saw Shark leaning on his car, smoking a cigarette.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 82

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 82 Crazy Christmas

*Guess who it is. There's a prize if you're right!*

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"You home? Any problems on the way back? Mm, nothing happened, that's good."

Shark sat at the entrance to his barbecue shop, smoking as he spoke on the phone. "Yeah, I told her, but nothing too specific. I just said that you were dealing with some things lately that were very troublesome, so you probably won't contact her for awhile. I told her to study and get better, and don't worry too much about you."

Gu Mingxi sounded a bit hoarse. "What did she say?"

"What would she say? She cried, she cried like a maniac. She cried for an hour, just standing on the street. No matter what I said, she wouldn't stop. In the end, she finally stopped, but I couldn't bring you up again. If I mentioned anything, she would start wailing again. It even made me want to cry."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

"Kid, as for you, what is there that you can't get through." Shark was about to console him, but Gu Mingxi cut him off. "Yeah, Shark, there's nothing that we can't get over. So Pang Qian will get better. Don't worry."

Gu Mingxi returned to Li Han's side, back to the small rental house in the provincial capital of S City. His life immediately returned to those mundane passing days that smelled of hospital disinfectant.

When they stayed in the hospital, sometimes there were no relatives available to visit and take care of Li Han. Gu Mingxi spent money to hire a caretaker. After all, he was male and he didn't have arms. He really couldn't stick around and



take care of Li Han. When they weren't in the hospital, if Li Chun or Huang Lingli didn't come, Gu Mingxi would take care of the things around the house.

He bought groceries, he washed the clothes, and even prepared food to suit Li Han's current diet. He was naturally slower at all these tasks than most people would be, but what could he do. He just had to get up early in the morning and start doing these things slowly, one by one and overcome them, one by one. If there were truly things he couldn't handle, Gu Mingxi would ask the neighbor to help out. Their neighbor was a very kind-hearted older woman, and seeing Gu Mingxi in this state really made her heart hurt. Usually, she would be lend a helping hand. And so, day by day, things passed like this.

Li Han's insurance reimbursement had already been refunded to her account. After the first reimbursement, Gu Mingxi figured out a new method. He told Shark that after each quarter, he would mail all the relevant information to Shark. Then Shark would help him to go E City to submit the papers for a reimbursement.

He'd brought back 100 thousand dollars from E City, 70 thousand from Gu Guoxiang, 20 thousand from Pang Shuisheng, and 10 thousand from Shark. Gu Mingxi recorded all these numbers very carefully in his account book, along with the money that Li Han's relatives and friends had given them.

These were all favors, and they had to be repaid.

The fees for medical treatment were like a bottomless pit. One container of IV medicine cost 500 dollars. One IV a day, and the patient had to pay for all of it. Family members of other patients all told Gu Mingxi that this medicine was really good, so he could only bite the bullet and buy it for Li Han.

One of the patients also introduced Li Han to a traditional medicine doctor in Kunming. They said that this doctor was very skilled. There were many patients whose doctors said that they couldn't be saved, but after seeing this traditional doctor and taking medicine for two months, they were living well.

Gu Mingxi didn't really believe these words too much, but Li Chun and Li Mu were both convinced by this brilliant sounding propaganda and both invested in this doctor. Li Chun immediately said she would accompany Li Han to Kunming, as if going there to take some traditional medicine would cure her then and



there. Gu Mingxi couldn't talk them out of it, and ended up buying three tickets to accompany them.

This trip to Kunming took three days and two nights. They spent 80 thousand dollars out of their own pockets. Li Han ordered three months of traditional medicine, and the doctor would send it over every half month.

Inside the rental house, there was always the scent of incense in the air. Gu Mingxi was responsible for brewing the medicine for Li Han. He'd already become very familiar with his feet in the kitchen. He could even clean a fish with his two feet. As an effect of learning those skills though, his feet were covered in scars, big and small. Some were from holding a knife, some from cutting vegetables, some were burns from pots, and there were even scraped from picking up broken dishware.

He was already accustomed to such things, so he had bandages prepared, along with burn medication and gauze. When he hurt his foot, he would rinse it off with water and then apply medicine. He rarely asked anyone to help him.

Li Han looked a lot better after the surgery. When they went to the hospital for IV drips afterwards, all the other patients would say that her surgery was a success, that Heaven really helps those who are worthy. Li Han chuckled as she leaned against Gu Mingxi. She said to them, "Of course I haven't lived enough, my son still hasn't graduated from college yet. Even if I must die, I should at least wait until after my Mingxi gets married and has children. I have to make sure there's a good woman to take care of Mingxi before I can leave with an easy heart."

By her side, Gu Mingxi spoke up unhappily, "Mom, what are you saying."

"What was I saying?" Li Han reached out to tug on Gu Mingxi's empty shirt sleeve. She smiled and said, "My son doesn't have arms, but look at how handsome he is. Tall and smart. If he had arms, there would be countless girls chasing him."

After her sickness, she often said silly things. Gu Mingxi saw the other patients with an expression like a smile, but not quite a smile, and he silently turned away.

Everything seemed to be changing for the better. But at the end of November,



at Li Han's checkup four months after her surgery, the CT scan showed that there was another 3 cm tumor in her liver. That meant the cancer had relapsed.

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Christmas Eve 2004 just happened to be a Friday, so her roommates wanted to go out. Yang Lu wanted to drag Pang Qian out, but she didn't agree.

"Give me some face. I told Sheng Feng that I'd definitely bring out you." Yang Lu pulled at Pang Qian's elbow, swaying back and forth. "Come on, let's go."

"I said I'm not going!" Pang Qian was very annoyed. It was the first time she'd gotten angry at Yang Lu. "Why do you keep helping Sheng Feng?! What do you get from it? I already said that I don't like him! I said that there's a boy that I like! I already told Sheng Feng so clearly. Does he not understand? Even if he doesn't understand, do you not understand either?!"

Yang Lu was dumbfounded, and their two other roommates were also very startled. And then Yang Lu cried. She wiped her tears away and walked out of the room.

Xue Wenwen chased after her. Wu Feiyan sat down next to Pang Qian and said, "Alright, Crab. I know that you're in a bad mood, but don't spray your fire at us. If you want to get angry, get angry at Sheng Feng. Or why don't you go find your missing boyfriend."

Pang Qian felt regret and gloom, her face scrunched in a scowl. Wu Feiyan continued, "To be honest, Sheng Feng really has perseverance. If it were someone else, the boy would have let go a long time ago or they girl would have already agreed. But you two still haven't found a resolution even after half a year. But I understand you. You don't like him. No matter how good he is, it doesn't matter."

Pang Qian looked over at her gratefully. Wu Feiyan said, "But still, you shouldn't say that to Yang Lu. You really haven't realized? Yang Lu... She's kind of interested in Sheng Feng."

"Ah?!" Pang Qian was shocked.

Wu Feiyan said, "Sheng Feng said before that he wanted to find a girlfriend from E City. After graduation, they could stay in Shanghai together if they



wanted, or they could go back home if they wanted. They could even go off and get married. Lu Lu is from Shanghai and she's an only child, so she definitely won't be able to follow Sheng Feng back to E City. So she didn't say anything. But everyone in the dorm is a girl, we can feel it, right?"

Pang Qian was struck. She didn't feel anything at all. She just knew that Yang Lu had pushed Sheng Feng into her sights. At her first sign of trouble, Yang Lu would notify Sheng Feng.

Pang Qian decided to go find Yang Lu to apologize. She didn't dare to mention about her liking him, but she agreed to go out with them. Yang Lu's tears turned into smiles, and she immediately sent a text to Sheng Feng.

Three boys from the same class were waiting for them at the bottom of the dorm. When Pang Qian arrived there, she could feel her head exploding. There was Sheng Feng, holding a teddy bear that was half the size of a person. The other two boys shuffled over to her.

Pang Qian felt irritated, especially with Yang Lu beside her. She glanced over at Yang Lu, but her face didn't relay anything out of the ordinary. Pang Qian didn't want this bear at all, but they were all standing at the dorm and it was Christmas. If she didn't accept it, that would be too petty.

Just as she was feeling strangled to death, Pang Qian's phone rang. It was as if her reinforcements had arrived. She picked up and called excitedly, "Hey!"

Note: If the author wants to write random words in English, that's fine. I'll carry them over (in italics). But oh, it sounds weird.

*"Merry!"* A young man's voice rang in her ears. It sounded very good. "Guess who it is. There's a prize if you're right!"

"Ah!" Pang Qian called out loudly, startling the classmates beside her. The person on the phone asked, "What is it? You scared me to death! Crab, are you at school? I'm at the school gate. I'm spending Christmas in Shanghai. Let's meet up!"

Reinforcement had really come! Pang Qian had never been so brazen before. Face filled with emotion, she said, "Dearest! You're finally here! I missed you so much! I'll wait for you at the bottom of the dorm. Hurry, hurry!"



The person on the other end of the phone, "..."

Pang Qian gave him the address and then hung up. The others looked at each other with dismay. Sheng Feng's face fell. Pang Qian said, "I'm sorry, my boyfriend's here. I can't go out with you guys."

No one motioned to leave, and Yang Lu just watched Pang Qian quietly. A moment later, a tall boy walked over leisurely.

He was wearing a black jacket. He looked just like a model, with a cool hairstyle and handsome face. He walked over to Pang Qian and grabbed onto her shoulders. Laughing, he said, "Ey, you're really pretty now."

Pang Qian followed along and looked at him shyly. She turned to the rest of the group and said, "Let me introduce you guys. This is my boyfriend, Xie Yi."

Xie Yi smiled. "You can call me *In*."

Xie Yi drove Pang Qian to a bar. He'd come with some friends to play in Shanghai. There were boys and girls, but Pang Qian didn't know any of them. She couldn't join in their conversations, so she just sat quietly on the side. She didn't drink alcohol. She just sat there on her own, drinking juice.

Xie Yi saw she wasn't happy, just sitting there the whole time. He asked, "What's wrong? You don't seem like the Crab that I know."

Pang Qian smiled. "It's nothing. I'm happy to see you."

"The one who was wearing the glasses, is he pursuing you? Little Crab's doing well on the market." Xie Yi was wearing a a v-neck, knitted cardigan that showed off his chest. Pang Qian felt that he looked very good. She said, "Even if my market's good, it's not better than yours."

"Don't change the topic. Tell me, why are you unhappy?"

"..."

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"How are you and Gu Mingxi now?"

It would have been fine if he didn't mention Gu Mingxi. Once he did, Pang Qian's tears just started to fall. Xie Yi was caught off guard by her crying, and quickly found some napkins for her.



After sobbing and sniffing for a long time, Pang Qian stammered out her story to Xie Yi. When he heard everything, he asked, “You haven’t contacted him in the past three months then?”

“He canceled his phone number,” Pang Qian said. “How am I supposed to contact him?”

“Isn’t he studying at B University?”

“Yeah. I called B University but they wouldn’t say anything. I want to find him, but I don’t know how to. I know his grandma’s address since I sent him something before.”

Xie Yi thought for a moment, and then suddenly asked, “Did you bring your ID card with you?”

Pang Qian was startled, “Yeah.”

He grabbed her hand and pulled her up, and then he tossed her coat to her. “Let’s go! It’s easy to find someone. I don’t believe that we won’t be able to find him.”

Pang Qian asked with surprised, “Where are we going?”

Xie Yi smiled, “Didn’t I say you’d get a prize if you guessed right? I’ll take you to go find him!”

Xie Yi drove Pang Qian to the airport and then bought two tickets to S City. Pang Qian’s mind was blank as she followed him onto the plane. At 2 AM, the two of them arrived at the S City Airport.

When they walked out of the airport, brightness shined into Pang Qian’s eyes. It was clearly the middle of the night, but why did she feel that it was so bright? The world was covered in a layer of white. There’d been a big snow storm in S City.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 83

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 83 Another Person

*I'm never believing you again! Give me back my Gu Mingxi!*

---

Xie Yi booked two rooms at a four star hotel in heart of S City. It was Christmas Eve, so the hotel rates were extremely expensive. Pang Qian felt very sorry and had wanted to pay for her own room, but the cost for one night was nearly an entire month's living expenses for her. She could only suggest going to the Jinjiang Inn (cheaper hotel chain) next door, but with just one glance from Xie Yi, she quieted.

He said, "I said this was a prize. I'm giving you a prize for still being able to recognize my voice after so long. Just take it as you're accompanying me to play over Christmas."

Pang Qian said quietly, "I've been listening to your voice for more than ten years, how could I not recognize it?"

Xie Yi stretched out his arm and gave her a pat on the head. He picked up their room cards and said, "It's late. Go and sleep. Tomorrow morning, we'll head to Z City to find him."

When she got to her room, Pang Qian felt that she was living out a dream. A few hours ago, she was back in her dorm in Shanghai arguing with Yang Lu, and then meeting Sheng Feng awkwardly. A few hours had passed, and she was actually in the faraway S City.

She took a shower, the warm water wearing away her fatigue. She couldn't sleep, so she stood by the window and looked out at all the snow outside.

So this was what the northern winters were like. Such dry air, such biting coldness, so much white. Just looking at it left your face a little painful. In this



kind of weather, Gu Mingxi would definitely be having a hard time. She wondered if he would get frostbite. He shouldn't ever foolishly walk out on the streets without proper shoes on. The temperature outside was much lower than it ever got in E City. Just standing outside briefly earlier, she couldn't handle the cold wind. She couldn't imagine the kind of life Gu Mingxi had there. He must not be very accustomed to it, and that's why he'd gotten so thin.

Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi had run into some troubles. He didn't like his major at school. Li Han's sickness had relapsed. But how could he cut off contact with her just because of that?

Pang Shuisheng told Pang Qian that Gu Mingxi had looked for him when he was in E City. He was there to get reimbursed for Li Han's medical fees. When Pang Qian found out that Li Han had cancer, she was very shocked and even more anxious to find Gu Mingxi.

She knew that he must be feeling a lot of pressure. Although she wasn't at his side, and she couldn't help much, but at least she could talk to him and carry a little bit of that burden with him.

She could go over to visit him. Gu Mingxi didn't know that in order to visit him, Pang Qian had continually been saving money. Such a far trip was considered a luxury for a child from a working class family, but Pang Qian was still able to save some money with hard work. And yet, every time she brought up visiting Z City, Gu Mingxi always blocked her from going.

With conflicted feelings, Pang Qian got into bed. She thought to herself that, in the end, she still made it here. If there were no accidents, she would very quickly be able to find Gu Mingxi.

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The next day, Pang Qian and Xie Yi left early in the morning. In order to save time, Xie Yi decided to just take a taxi all the way to Z City, regardless of the price. Pang Qian had already completely dropped the idea of paying for her half of things. How could she keep up with the spending of a son from a wealthy family? It was best not to argue at this time.

"When we get back, you have to treat me to a meal. I heard the food at your cafeteria is really good," Xie Yi said.



Pang Qian laughed, “Definitely.”

“And you have to invite me out to play ping pong,” Xie Yi said. “You don’t even know. When I played with my friends from America, they even asked if I was an Olympic champion.”

Pang Qian, “...”

The taxi ride to Z City took more than two hours. When they got there, the driver didn’t know his way around, so Xie Yi and Pang Qian had to get off and find a local taxi driver. Pang Qian gave him Gu Mingxi’s grandmother’s address, and they quickly arrived in the neighborhood.

When they took the stairs up, Pang Qian felt very excited. She hadn’t ever thought she’d show up there. With just a knock on the door, she’d have found Gu Mingxi.

But in the end, she was only left disappointed. It was a 60 year old woman who opened the door. She carried a child in her arms and told Pang Qian that she’d bought the house at the start of the year. The people who lived there previously had long ago moved away.

Pang Qian asked, “Do you know where they moved to?”

The woman shook her head. “How could I know that? I went through an agent to buy the house. Oh, right...” She went inside the house and came back out with a pile of envelopes. “They’re all from B University for a kid named Gu Mingxi. If you two find the people who owned this place previously, please tell them to change their address and stop sending these letters here.”

Pang Qian took the letters and exchanged a glance with Xie Yi. Xie Yi decided, “Let’s go to B University.”

Pang Qian really admired Xie Yi. When they arrived at B University, he didn’t bother looking for any teachers. He just asked around and headed straight to the male dorm where the sophomores in software engineering lived. Pang Qian waited at the bottom of the building and Xie Yi went to ask around. Half an hour later, he came down and told Pang Qian some news that hit like a bolt of lightning on a clear day. After freshman year, Gu Mingxi had already submitted the papers for withdrawal from the school.



Pang Qian was stupefied and her eyes immediately reddened. Xie Yi said, "Crab, first don't worry. I asked them for their class instructor's phone number. Let's go ask about it. Withdrawing from school doesn't necessarily mean he's cut off contact."

The instructor was a Mr. Zhang, a young and enthusiastic teacher. When he received Xie Yi's call, he quickly headed over from his residence. When he saw Pang Qian and Xie Yi, he succinctly asked about their relation with Gu Mingxi. Teacher Zhang said, "I've been looking for Gu Mingxi as well. The phone number we have on file from when he started has been disconnected, and his mother's phone number is always off. I mailed some letters to the address we have, but he never responded to those either."

Xie Yi asked, "Teacher Zhang, you must have some ideas. We've come from so far away, we're really worried about Gu Mingxi."

Teacher Zhang scratched his head, and then suddenly said, "When Gu Mingxi was studying at B University, he was staying in a rental house nearby. I've been there a few times. After he withdrew from classes, I went to ask and the place is still under their names. They paid rent on the place until the end of the (lunar) year, but these past few months, he and his mother haven't been living there."

Xie Yi and Pang Qian's hopes were immediately revived. Xie Yi said, "Teacher Zhang, can I trouble you to take us to that house to see?"

Teacher Zhang brought them to that old neighborhood and found the rental house that Gu Mingxi and Li Han had been staying at. The doors were locked, but Teacher Zhang found the landlord. After hearing the intent of these three people, the landlord finally agreed to open the door to the house.

When the door opened, Pang Qian and Xie Yi were both shocked. The place was very simple and crude. The fabric on the furniture were nearly completely faded. Everything inside was covered in a layer of dust. They walked inside and looked around, their hearts heavier and heavier.

Xie Yi saw some cobwebs in the corners of the room and couldn't help saying, "This condition of this place isn't that great. What's Gu Mingxi up to. How could he live in a place like this?"

Pang Qian saw the bed in the living room and then walked over to the only



bedroom in the place. Then she saw a special looking desk.

Gu Mingxi hadn't ordered a new custom desk. He'd bought a children's table with adjustable legs. He'd set the desk as low as he could, about 30 cm shorter than a normal desk.

Pang Qian walked over to the desk and brushed her hand across the top, leaving her fingerprints in the dust. Her Gu Mingxi had once sat there, two feet raised up onto the desk, skillfully working on his homework, reading, sending text messages, using the computer... But now, where was he?

Some clothes and daily necessities were also left in the room, but it wasn't much. Pang Qian found a piece of paper and wrote a note for Gu Mingxi. She told him that she'd come by and hoped that when he saw the note, he could contact her.

When they were leaving the rental house, Pang Qian turned back for another look. She asked Xie Yi, "Do you think he'll be able to read my note?"

Xie Yi nodded, "Yeah."

"Then will he call me?"

Xie Yi thought for a moment and then shook his head, "I don't know."

He was a man, and men understood other men. He couldn't bear to tell Pang Qian that by looking at this house, he knew that Gu Mingxi wasn't doing well. Xie Yi felt that Gu Mingxi might disappear really disappear.

He could only comfort Pang Qian, "He's taking a break from school, it's just a break. Next September, he might go back. We have Teacher Zhang's phone number, and I asked for a few numbers from Gu Mingxi's classmates. When the time comes, we can call and ask about it."

In the end, there was nothing he could do. He opened his arms and gave Pang Qian a hug. He said, "Crab, don't cry. If he's hiding from you on purpose, there's nothing we can do. Gu Mingxi must be facing some problems, otherwise he definitely wouldn't be able to leave you."

Pang Qian was unable to say anything. She admitted that she was very useless. Faced with this kind of problem, all she knew to do was cry. She didn't know how



many tears she'd shed these past few months. How hateful she was! But that's how worried she was. She just wanted to find her Gu Mingxi, that youth who had grown up alongside her. She didn't care what kind of troubles he was facing. He didn't have arms, was there something bigger than that? She didn't care about that, so what else would bother her?

So, when someone wanted to disappear from another person's world, it was actually this easy. Pang Qian cried in Xie Yi's arms and then choked out, "Didn't you say it was easy to find a person? Why is it that you never keep your words! Last time you said we'd be able to reach him in time! But then we didn't! It's the same this time! I'm never believing you again! Give me back my Gu Mingxi! Xie Yi, give me back my Gu Mingxi!"

Xie Yi felt more injustice than [Dou E](#) (story/play about a girl named Dou E). When he saw the surprised eyes of Teacher Zhang and the old landlord, he could only gently comfort Pang Qian, "Okay, okay, don't cry. I'm always the bad one. Aiya, I promise, next time I'll definitely help you find Gu Mingxi."

"Next time?!" Pang Qian stood under the sky filled with snow, crying out loud. The large snowflakes fell onto hers and Xie Yi's heads and clothes. She suddenly looked around her and kept calling out, "Gu Mingxi's missing, (sounds of crying) ... My Gu Mingxi, (sounds of crying)... Gu Mingxi..."

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On the plane ride back to Shanghai, Xie Yi told jokes to Pang Qian and he did some magic tricks, but he was unable to make the girl beside him smile. Finally, Xie Yi said, "Little Crab, you're not the only lovelorn one. I've been that way for several years, but I've never acted as desperately as you."

"Who's acting desperately!" Pang Qian glared at him with a pair of swollen eyes. She said, "Lovelorn! When have you even been lovelorn?! Zheng Qiaoqiao told me that you had a girlfriend in America!"

Xie Yi's eyes widened. "What are you saying! When did I have a girlfriend!"

"I saw the pictures where you were acting very close to a girl."

"...It's just a photo. Don't go around spreading rumors." Xie Yi curled his lips. "I'm a very faithful guy."



Pang Qian looked at him for awhile and then asked, "Do you still keep in touch with Xiao Yujing?"

"..." His originally lively eyes dimmed. In a low voice, he said, "We don't contact each other much. Just the general mass messages over the holidays. I just send a message to say Happy New Year, Merry Christmas, Happy Lantern Festival, Happy Dragon Boat Festival, Happy National Day..."

Pang Qian was speechless. Xie Yi suddenly turned to her and said, "Little Crab, why don't the two of us get together then? We're in the same boat, and both situations are as bad as the other. And we've been friends for more than ten years. Who knows, maybe some sparks will fly in time."

And which such silly talk, Pang Qian, who hadn't smiled all day, suddenly smiled. She laughed heartily, her eyes still red. The travelers next to her looked at her as if she were crazy.

Xie Yi suddenly said, "What are you laughing about? Is being together with me something laughable?"

Pang Qian vigorously shook her head, but she didn't say anything. She wouldn't tell Xie Yi that there was a time when he existed in her diary as a prince, as a star, as an idol. A time when she looked on at him from afar. She'd never before thought that there would be a day that they would be sitting side by side like this, brazenly making jokes.

Time slipped away through the crevices. Outside the plane window, the night sky was like a giant black hole. It sucked away the time, sucked away the space, sucked away their carefree childhood and youth. Pang Qian missed Gu Mingxi so much that for the first time in her life, she felt depressed, felt distressed, felt a deep fear. She was afraid that she'd never find Gu Mingxi again. If she couldn't see him again in this lifetime, what would she do?

In this world, where would she be able to find another person who would look at her with such gentle eyes, who would unconditionally and easily accept her capriciousness and unreasonableness, who would make her smile when she was feeling down, who would sit beside her quietly when she was hurt, softly whispering comforting word to her and listening to her anger and complaints.

In this world, how could there be another person who would sacrifice their



time to help her study, not just one or two days, or even one or two months, or even one or two years. He'd spent all these years with her and finally sent her to a great university.

This person would, without hesitation, skip class with her when she wanted to. When he knew she wanted to go to Shanghai, he would, against all odds, take her there. He always gave her the best toys and food. He bought the comics she loved to read, collected the CDs of the celebrities she most liked. He always said he didn't like to eat pork and would give her the braised pork chops or sweet and sour pork. But actually, he didn't dislike pork that much. He only did that because he wanted to.

So, she was also willing, because then he would be happy. There weren't many things that made Gu Mingxi happy, but Pang Qian knew that if she ate his pork chop, he would be happy.

Even if she felt she couldn't finish eating it, she would still work hard to eat it.

Yes, there wouldn't be another person in this world for whom she would so willingly eat a second porkchop or tenderloin. It was because she liked to see that smile emerge in his eyes and hear him stiffly say, "Pang Pang, you sure can eat." Just like him, her heart felt as sweet as honey.

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# Chapter 84

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 84 Farewell, Compound

*I'm worried that if Gu Mingxi returns, he won't be able to find me.*

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Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) 2005, while everyone was immersed in the New Year's celebrations, a thing (lit. something neither big nor small) happened at the Golden Compound.

Although Old Zeng was nearly 80 years old, head full of white hair, teeth all fallen out, he was still very healthy. Over the past twenty years, the residents of the compound had changed time and time again, but he happily and leisurely remained in his guard house on his own. But just a few days before the Spring Festival, he collapsed.

The ambulance arrived quickly, but he'd already stopped breathing. Old Zeng had been a solitary old man, relying on the metals company to live all his life. There weren't many old employees of the metals company still around though. The warmhearted Pang Shuisheng acted as the person in charge and made the funeral arrangements for Old Zeng.

The funeral diluted the festiveness of the New Year celebrations. Every time Pang Shuisheng left the compound and looked at the locked up guard's room, his heart felt a kind of sadness.

Everyone said that now that Old Zeng, who'd been guarding the Golden Compound for the past twenty something years, was gone, it signified that the compound had finally reached the end of its line. Sometimes, there were things that were just so incredible. After the Spring Festival, news came about transferring deeds for the residents. Pang Shuisheng told Pang Qian that a developer had reached an agreement with the metals company, and they were going to build a shopping center there. They were going to demolish the place



soon.

Originally, Pang Qian wasn't concerned about the compensation. But Pang Shuisheng said she'd grown up and was studying finance, so she should participate in the family discussion.

Most of the original tenants decided to leave and then return after construction. The developers said they would also build a residential place for them to return to, or they could take a sum of money. Pang Qian carefully went over the documents from the development company, and realized that, although the new residences would be a bit larger, since they were more than twenty stories high, the value of a new house would be less(?). She boldly told her father her concerns and suggested not taking the house, but just taking the money.

Jin Ai'hua was against this proposal, but Pang Shuisheng agreed with his daughter. Their current home couldn't be considered small, but neither was it large. If the chance came, of course they should get a bigger house.

And so, Pang Shuisheng accepted the 550 thousand compensation. A lot of people called him a fool, and Pang Shuisheng didn't explain to them. He just clenched his teeth and bought a new house in the center of the city, in the Prosperous North neighborhood. It was 109 sqm and cost 760 thousand, and he put down a 100 thousand mortgage.

Since the new place couldn't be given to them yet, Pang Shuisheng and his family rented out a place for the meantime. All the residents of the Golden Compound trickled out and moved away, and all the old enmity between old neighbors gradually eased up.

Zhong Xiaolian sought out Jin Ai'hua. Zhong Xiaolian had already retired, while Jin Ai'hua was still three years short of retirement. They stood at the entrance to the building as they talked about their more than twenty years at this place. In the end, they landed on the topic of Li Han.

"Ah Han was a good person," Zhong Xiaolian said. "And Gu Mingxi, he was a really good kid. I can't do anything about having a son. But if I had a daughter, I would have definitely made him my son-in-law."

Jin Ai'hua, "..."



When they moved, Pang Qian packed up all her things. She was born in the compound and she'd grown up there. That small room was filled with her twenty years of memories.

If she didn't need to pack, she wouldn't have known. But after she packed, she realized how many things Gu Mingxi had given her. Expensive things, things not worth money, big and small... In nearly every drawer, she found something that brought back memories of him.

She found a large paper box and put all of the comics Gu Mingxi had given to her on the bottom. Then she put in the rest of the things, one by one. She threw away a lot of her own things, but all the gifts Gu Mingxi sent her, even the rough greeting card he'd made in primary school, were carefully packed into that box.

Pang Qian said to Pang Shuisheng, "Dad, can we keep our phone number even if we move houses? I'm worried that if Gu Mingxi returns, he won't be able to find me."

Pang Shuisheng pat his daughter's head and said, "I know. I won't change the number."

In April 2005, Pang Shuisheng took his wife and daughter and moved out of the Golden Compound. It was different for them, because unlike the other residents who would return here, they wouldn't be coming back.

When they were leaving, Pang Shuisheng stood outside his front door and looked over at Apt. 502. Li Han and Gu Mingxi likely left because of Gu Guoxiang. Their apartment was empty. Pang Shuisheng had the spare keys to Apt. 502, but Pang Qian had never gone into it.

There once was a boy who leaned against that door frame, watching and smiling at her. It was a scene, a moment that would never come again.

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While Pang Shuisheng was buying a new house, Gu Mingxi was worried about another problem.

After Li Han's relapse, she started a new round of chemotherapy in preparation for a second surgery after the start of the new year.

The painful chemotherapy and cancer relapse dealt a blow to Li Han's



enthusiasm for treatment. Her spirit suffered heavily, and her physical condition was worsening. She lost a large amount of hair, her face was jaundiced, her eyes muddy, her stomach bloated, and she couldn't sleep at night. Because of the pain, she sometimes couldn't stop from yelling out. Gu Mingxi knelt down beside her and comforted her in soft whispers. He spoke to her and they would finally get through each night.

The treatment fees were like water, all flowing out and away. Each month, they had to pay 30 or 40 thousand out of their own pocket. Gu Mingxi was faced with a tremendous amount of pressure. He stopped listening to Li Chun and Li Mu's ideas. Their ears were soft and easily susceptible. Whenever they heard about some new medicine being good, they immediately wanted to get it for Li Han. Whenever they heard about a doctor being good or successful, they wanted to take Li Han to see them. Gu Mingxi realized that the amount of money they had remaining wasn't enough to sustain such blind treatments, so he took over managing their finances.

That Spring Festival, Gu Mingxi and Li Han returned to Z City and had dinner at Li Mu's new house. In front of the elders, Li Mu and Li Chun threw some veiled criticisms over at Gu Mingxi. Their tone insinuated that Gu Mingxi didn't do his best to get treatment for Li Han. He was holding onto the money too tightly, probably because he was afraid that they'd use all the money for treatment.

Li Chun said, "Mingxi, this is your mom, your only mother. Even if you have to sacrifice everything else, you have to keep treating her. What are you afraid of? Your mom still has a house. It's worth 300 thousand."

Li Mu said, "Moreover, if there's not enough money, you can ask your dad. Asking him for 200 thousand isn't hard. He's a big boss. If they ask him to do something, they have to send thousands his way each time."

Before Gu Mingxi could say anything, Li Han already spoke. "I'm not selling my house. I'm leaving it for Mingxi. If the day comes that I don't have the money to keep getting treated and have to sell my house, I'll just go jump off a building first."

Gu Mingxi's expression immediately changed. "Mom!"

Li Han let out a sigh and looked at him sorrowfully. "I'm useless. I don't have



anything left to give you except for this house. If one day when I'm gone, you don't even have this house, what are you going to do?"

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# Chapter 85

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 85 End of the Road

*I won't go back to find her.*

---

Actually, Gu Mingxi had actually considered selling the house before. The expenses to keep it were too much. In the past year, they'd used up most of the money they had. If they didn't sell the house, where would he be able to get money to continue his mother's treatment? But it was Li Han's name on the house, so he couldn't do anything about it.

When they returned to Z City, Gu Mingxi and Li Han were finally able to live in their new house. But neither of them felt that warming feeling of moving into a new house. Li Han laid in bed every day, and in order to take care of her, Gu Mingxi slept on the floor beside her.

One evening, Li Han kept turning in bed, unable to sleep. Gu Mingxi sat up and asked her, "Mom, what's wrong? Do you need some water?"

"No," Li Han replied weakly. She felt that she was having trouble breathing. After taking a breath, she asked, "Mingxi, how much money do we have left?"

Gu Mingxi was silent for a moment, and then he answered truthfully, "Not much."

"We're probably not going to get the money back from your uncle. It's not that he doesn't want to return it, but he genuinely doesn't have the money. Let's not force him." Li Han forced a laugh. "Don't ask your dad for any more money either. We've already separated. He's not obligated to help me."

Gu Mingxi said, "Mom, don't worry about this. I'll figure something out. I have some friends, I can ask them to borrow some money."

Li Han shook her head. "When you borrow money, it must always be returned.



Your Sha friend (Shark, his last name is Sha) has already lent you 50 thousand dollars. It wasn't given for free. How are you going to return the money later?"

She spoke the truth. Gu Mingxi was silent. Then he clenched his teeth and said, "Mom, there's no other way. Let's sell the house."

"No," Li Han said firmly, even as her voice was so fragile. "Mingxi, I know about my sickness. No matter how we treat it, I won't live long. I haven't given up yet because of you. You don't have arms, so how could I leave you in the world all by yourself? If I can stay with you a few more years, it's worth it to spend a bit of money. But if we have to touch this house, then I'm not going to continue treatment."

"Mom..." Gu Mingxi knelt and sat beside the bed, head lowered, forehead on Li Han's hand. His mother's hand was tender and warm as she stroked his cheek. He said, "What's the point of having a house if you're not here anymore? Mom, as long as you're here, it's okay even if we have to sleep on the street."

"Silly kid." Li Han smiled as she knocked Gu Mingxi's head. Her words were full of love.

After the room was silent for awhile, Li Han started up again, "Mingxi."

Gu Mingxi lifted his head, "I'm here, Mom."

Li Han leisurely opened her mouth and said, "Tell me, in your heart, do you blame me?"

"..." Gu Mingxi knew what his mother was asking about. He answered, "No."

"I know that you must blame me a little bit. You're my son, so how could I not know." Li Han reached out stroked his cheek again. "Mingxi, promise me that in September, you'll go back to school."

Gu Mingxi shook his head. "Mom, I really don't want to go. It's a waste of time."

"Then you don't even have a diploma." Li Han sighed. "What kind of work can you do in the future? How can you... go back to find Pang Qian."

"I won't go back to find her," Gu Mingxi said evenly. "The two of us have already parted. She's living very well now. She'll probably go to graduate school,



or just find a job, and her salary will be really high.”

“What about you?” Li Han asked. “What are you going to do in the future? Mingxi, have you thought about it?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then nodded. “I’ve thought about it. Mom, when you’re feeling better, I’m going to go make some money.”

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After the New Year, Gu Mingxi returned to S City with Li Han, and they lived in that small rental near the hospital.

He started to carefully plan how he would spend his days. He knew how to bargain when he went shopping. He’d ask the landlord auntie to make a trip with him to the market and then buy some daily necessities and picked out the things on sale. Then he’d head home with his backpack on. As for heavier things like rice and gasoline, Gu Mingxi had those delivered.

He hadn’t bought any clothes in a long time. There were some dark-colored clothes where the color was already fading, but he didn’t care. He just washed them clean and wore them. He even learned from Li Han how to sew on buttons. And he could even mend his clothes if the thread broke.

Sometimes even he felt it was unfathomable. In the past, although he wasn’t incompetent, he really wasn’t very good at household chores. Ever since he was young, he just studied and painted. His family was considered well off and he never had too many worries. Gu Mingxi never would have thought that one day, he’d be the one in charge of all the household duties.

But what else could be done. His mother was getting old and he’d grown up too. No matter his disability, he was still a son and a man. A man originally should take on more responsibility than a woman. He’d already relied on his mother for more than twenty years. Now it was time for his mother to rely on him. Gu Mingxi thought that he really should plan out his life well and consider his future. Not just for his mother, but also for himself.

Oyster and Clam already started working when they were 17 or 18 years old. And since then, they’d been earning money to support themselves and even sending some back home. Gu Mingxi was nearly 21 years old now and he’d never made earned any money. Currently, their family was relying solely on their



savings and his mother's retirement fund. If they continued like that, they'd surely be struggling to make ends meet in the future. So Gu Mingxi felt that he needed to carefully consider how he would support his life.

After Li Han's second surgery, she recovered well. Huang Lingli quickly came over to take care of her and said that twenty days later, Li Chun would come to take her place. Gu Mingxi felt a bit empty inside. Every day he walked down the street and bought an S City newspaper, looking to see if there were any suitable jobs for him to take.

Gu Mingxi thought about the things he could do. He could draw and he could use the computer. His English used to be pretty good, but now whenever he saw something in English, there would be a lot of things he found unfamiliar.

Gu Mingxi called several places, but after they found out he only had a high school diploma, they rejected him. A few places wanted to setup interviews, but after he mentioned his physical condition, they would immediately retract them.

Even a calling center didn't need an interview with him. Gu Mingxi said, "Although I don't have arms, I can still answer phones without a problem. I'm very familiar with using my feet for things. I can be self-dependent, and I won't bring any trouble to the company."

In the end, the person on the other end of the call just hung up like that.

When he was still in school, Gu Mingxi had been rejected many times. Private middle schools, top high schools, colleges. At the time, even Thirst for Knowledge Elementary didn't want to accept him.

At the time, 7 year old Gu Mingxi sat in the principal's office with six or seven teachers around him. Li Han took out his pencil case and a notebook and placed them in front of his feet. With young, tender feet, Gu Mingxi clumsily opened the pencil box and pulled out a pencil with his toes, placing it to the side. He used his left foot to hold down the notebook and used his right foot to flip through the pages. He raised his head and said, "Teacher, I can use my feet to turn the pages."

And then, he picked up his pencil with his right toes. Using his left foot to adjust the position, he lowered his head and started writing on the notebook.



“Teacher, I can use my feet to write. I can write a lot of words. This is my name.” He wrote down the three characters for “Gu Mingxi.” It was neat, although a bit large. He proudly lifted his head and said to the principal, “I can also erase and draw lines with a ruler. Teacher, let me go to school. I’ll make sure to study well.”

The principal asked, “What about meals then?”

Gu Mingxi nodded, “I can eat by myself.”

“What about using the restroom?”

Gu Mingxi’s face reddened. “I can’t take off my pants.” But he quickly came up with a solution and proclaimed loudly, “Teacher, I can just not drink water. If I don’t drink water, I won’t have to go pee!”

When they left the principal’s office, Pang Qian and Pang Shuisheng were waiting in the corridor. They’d come together for the interview. 6 year old Pang Qian happily bounced around by Gu Mingxi’s side and pulled on his shirt sleeve. She asked, “Gu Mingxi, did the teacher agree to let you come study?”

Gu Mingxi answered, pleased with himself, “Of course they agreed!”

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When Gu Mingxi went to the recruitment center, he realized that every time he stopped in front of a recruitment table and started reading about the company, the recruiter’s eyes would sweep over him. But then when he was done reading and wanted to ask the recruiter some questions, they would all immediately pull their eyes away, as if they didn’t know there was someone right in front of them.

Gu Mingxi approached a recruiter and asked for a form to fill in. The person hesitated before eventually handing him a blank form. Gu Mingxi took off his flip flops and raised his left foot. That person immediately pulled his hands back. With some impatience in his voice, “Forget it. It’s a waste for you to fill out the form. We don’t take disabled people.”

When he left the area, there was an I-shaped pedestrian bridge. This was the center of S City, and the bridge was very wide with many people walking across it. Gu Mingxi carried his backpack and quietly walked over to the bridge. He



realized that there were many street peddlers on the bridge and some performers (lit. people who sell talent). There was an elder playing the erhu, and he was blind. And someone playing guitar and singing seemed to suffer from paralysis. There was also a peddler who was selling small straw figures. Although you couldn't see anything wrong with him, there was a pair of crutches at his side.

Gu Mingxi stood around there for two hours. When he returned home, an idea popped into his mind.

An outrageous idea, but he wanted to try it out.

Over the next three days, he went to the bridge every day and carefully observed the street peddlers and their business situations. There were also some passersby who dropped money into the performers tip jars. The idea in his mind grew more and more concrete. After another five days, he told Li Han and Huang Lingli that he'd found a job that he wanted to try out.

The next day, the bridge gained another young man. His hair was cut short, his body thin, his skin tanned, wearing a clean shirt and shorts, flip flops on his feet, he sat on the floor. Under his shoulders were two empty half-sleeves. Next to his feet, there was a large backpack, completely filled with things.

Gu Mingxi sat next to a man selling straw animal figures. He lowered his eyes and casually took out the things in his bag, placing them on the floor. A3 water color paper, pigments, a palette, a soda bottle filled with water, a brush, and a few sample pieces.

The man beside him was making a rabbit out of straw. He asked him, "High voltage transformer?"

Gu Mingxi nodded.

"How many years?"

"Fifteen years."

"Can you draw?"

"Mm."

"Where did you used to setup?"



“...” Gu Mingxi casually said, “Used to be in Z City.”

“This place is definitely better. S City’s the provincial capital. More people, kinder, generous, easier with giving out money.”

Gu Mingxi was silent for awhile, then he turned his head, “I’m here to draw, not feed myself.”

“Drop it. Everyone here is disabled, forget keeping face. Is your pride going to feed you?” The man laughed heartily. “You’re already like this. Just sit here a bit. You can draw shit and people will still give you money. Making 200 dollars a day isn’t a problem. If you meet someone wealthy, you might even get a red sheet (100 yuan note is red).”

Gu Mingxi’s jaw tensed, his eyes cold, as he solemnly reiterated, “I’m here to draw, not feed myself.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 86

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 86 Endless Mountains and Rivers

*Gu Mingxi, is it you?*

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Li Han asked Gu Mingxi, “What kind of work did you find?”

Gu Mingxi said, “Internet bar administrator.”

“Can you do it?”

“Yeah, Mom.” Gu Mingxi smiled and said, “The boss is really nice. When I’m working the day shift, I can even come back for lunch. And they pay at the end of each shift.”

Li Han said, “Oh... Then they really are a good person.”

Gu Mingxi thusly began his “working career.” He would leave early in the morning and come back late at night. In the middle of the day, he went over to the hospital to have lunch with his mother.

When he first started sitting at the bridge, he definitely wasn’t used to it and he was very nervous. But most of all, he felt embarrassed. He couldn’t even raise his head to look at people, and he only stared at his feet holding onto a brush, drawing one page at a time. In front of him, the feet of passersby crossed, and occasionally someone would stop. He uneasily glanced up before immediately lowering his head back down.

The first afternoon, he didn’t sell a single painting. The man who sold the straw animal figures was Cheng, and everyone called him Cannon Cheng. Cannon Cheng couldn’t help but say to Gu Mingxi, “Xiao Gu, you’re too shy. You won’t make any money that way. We’re not stealing anything, we’re just earning money off our talents. What are you so embarrassed about? If someone comes looking, you have to make a greeting.”



Gu Mingxi asked, "How do you greet them?"

"You just say, 'Sir, Miss, buy a painting. Pay however much you'd like and take it home for your kids to see.'"

Gu Mingxi frowned, "Pay as much as you'd like?"

"Bullshit, what else? You think they came here to buy paintings and that they really like your work?" Cannon Cheng held up the straw frog he just made for Gu Mingxi to see. "Alright, when someone comes by, I'll help you call them in."

Later on, a young mother was taking her daughter across the bridge. The little miss was completely entranced by the straw figures that Cannon Cheng made. She crouched down in front of him and looked at them happily. The young mother wasn't in a rush, so she let Cannon Cheng make her daughter a little rabbit. After she payed, Cannon Cheng pointed over to Gu Mingxi and said, "It'll take me five minutes to finish making this. Go on and take a look at that guy's paintings. It's not easy for the kid, but his paintings are pretty good."

Gu Mingxi had already painted several watercolors. Most of the time, they were animals and plants. Exaggerated and colorful. The young mother looked at his empty shirt sleeves and asked, "How much for these?"

Gu Mingxi really couldn't say something like "Pay as much as you'd like." He lifted his head to look at her and said quietly, "Small one's five dollars, big one's ten dollars."

"Then I'll take one." The young mother pulled out five dollars and handed it to Gu Mingxi. His right foot was holding onto his brush, so he could only lift his left foot to accept the money. He was very careful to make sure he didn't touch her hand. The young mother called over to her daughter, "Sweetie, come and pick a painting."

The little miss happily ran over in front of Gu Mingxi and picked a small painting of a squirrel. She opened her mouth and smiled to Gu Mingxi, and then said, "This squirrel's really cute!"

Gu Mingxi also smiled, "Glad that you like it."

That was his first customer. Since he opened for business, Gu Mingxi gradually picked up the confidence to make a greeting when someone passed by.



Actually, he started to consider. Cannon Cheng was right. People didn't stop because he painted something spectacular. It's because they felt bad for a disabled person.

In the past, Gu Mingxi was more or less indifferent towards the strangers who looked at him pitifully. He knew that there was no way for him to change their thoughts. It was obvious and normal for others to feel sympathy for him.

He had his dignity though, and he hoped to gain the respect of others. But in the eyes of Chinese society, being disabled definitely put you in a position that was below that of a healthy person. Gu Mingxi was just one person and he couldn't change anything. What he could do was to stick to his own principles and ideas and live a good life.

Cannon Cheng's predictions were pretty good. Gu Mingxi really did make up to 200 dollars in a day, since he often met very generous people. They'd spend 50 dollars or even 100 dollars just for a single painting. When Gu Mingxi wanted to give them their change, they wouldn't take it. They said, "Keep it to buy more materials."

There were times that Gu Mingxi would stop painting and take a break. The bridge didn't have a roof, so he would lean back against the railing and look up at the sky.

The sky in the city wasn't very blue, but dull and grey. Even the clouds weren't very white. A flock of birds would fly past, and then Gu Mingxi would think of Pang Qian. What was she doing now?

When he thought of her, he would study how to make those straw figures from Cannon Cheng. He could make a crab, a green straw crab with two big claws. Gu Mingxi really liked it.

He used his feet to make it, but no matter what, it didn't turn out very good. It wasn't like he lacked patience though. He used his toes to slowly and carefully join together the straw pieces. Cannon Cheng spent a few minutes to make a little figure of a crab, but Gu Mingxi still couldn't make one after an entire day. Still, he found pleasure in making it, and he would always smile looking at that half-finished crab.



After Li Han's surgery, she needed to go through three weeks of chemotherapy, so they'd have to stay in S City until May. Gu Mingxi spent the next three months on that bridge.

In those three months, he came across many annoying things. For example, the city tried to get rid of the peddlers, there were thieves and passersby causing troubles, and the difficulties that came along with a sudden rainstorm.

In those three months, he came across even more warm people and things. The world always had more good people. Gu Mingxi stopped caring about the reason that they bought his paintings. After all, a few thousand dollars of extra money each month meant that he and his mother would be able to live a bit more comfortably.

Most people would still pick out a painting they liked after paying money, or they'd wait and watch as Gu Mingxi finished painting something and take that before leaving. But there were still a small group of people who said they'd buy a painting, but would just leave without one after paying. Gu Mingxi couldn't call them back no matter what he did.

Once, he called over to a young man. "Sir, you forgot your painting!"

He just turned back and said, "Forget it, I don't want it anymore."

Gu Mingxi stood up and said, "If you don't want the painting, I'll give you your money back. I'm running a business here, not trying to feed myself."

That man's face was completely unhappy. "How can there be someone like you!" Seeing Gu Mingxi about to respond, he impatiently waved his hand. "Alright, don't say anymore. I'm in a hurry, give me the painting."

He randomly grabbed a painting and then turned and left. Gu Mingxi kept watching his receding figure, until he got to the stairs of the bridge, and he just threw the painting away.

The paper flew off and drifted down from the bridge, slowly, until it landed in the path of the passing people below. Someone walking turned and looked upwards. He bent over to pick up the painting and carefully looked at it awhile. Then he raised his head up to the bridge.

Xu Shuanghua carried the painting in his hands and walked over to Gu Mingxi.



He looked down at this young man without arms, who was using his feet to paint. Gu Mingxi lifted his head and a shy smile appeared on his face. He said, "Mister, take a look at my paintings. Pick one out if you'd like. They're very cheap."

Xu Shuanghua was nearly 50 years old. He had a medium build, somewhat elegant features, though he was dressed very ordinary. He didn't say anything and just watched as Gu Mingxi painted.

Gu Mingxi had already grown accustomed to the passersby watching him. He put all his attention onto the painting, and soon, two snuggling kittens were born onto the page.

When he lifted his foot to rinse off his brush, Xu Shuanghua asked, "Have you studied it before?"

Gu Mingxi lifted his head and then nodded. "Several years."

"How many?"

"Almost ten years. I started when I was 9 years old."

"How old are you now?"

"21."

Xu Shuanghua looked at the painting in his hands and asked, "These brush strokes are used in examinations. Are you an art student?"

"Ah, no." Although this man looked rather apathetic, Gu Mingxi didn't feel the need to put up his guard. He answered, "I studied at the [Children's Palace](#) (kind of like a big community center) when I was younger, and then I studied under a teacher from junior high onward. Most of the students there were art students, so the things we draw inevitable utilized techniques that get tested."

"Why didn't you go to college?" Xu Shuanghua asked as he followed suit and sat down on the ground. He crossed his legs and continued asking, "Is it because your family had difficulties?"

Gu Mingxi said quietly, "I withdrew from school. My mom's sick and I need to take care of her."

"What about your dad?"



“He lives far away. They’re divorced.”

“What’s your name?”

“Gu Mingxi.”

And then, Xu Shuanghua didn’t say anything more. Gu Mingxi also didn’t initiate any conversation. He continued to set up his paper and paint. Xu Shuanghua silently watched him from the side, watching as he painted.

After he sat for two hours, Xu Shuanghua didn’t say anything and just got up and left.

In the next few days, Gu Mingxi often saw this middle aged man. They didn’t talk to each other. That man just stood beside him or sat down next to him and watched as he painted one thing after another.

Then one day, Xu Shuanghua said, “Xiao Gu, pack up your things. I want to take you somewhere.”

After just a few days, he said this to Gu Mingxi. If it were someone else, they definitely would have refused. but Gu Mingxi just hesitated briefly before he packed up his things.

He put his backpack onto his shoulders, but he was having a hard time, so Xu Shuanghua helped him. Gu Mingxi said, “Thank you.”

Xu Shuanghua said lightly, “You’re welcome. Let’s go, my car is down below.”

Gu Mingxi hadn’t expected at all that Xu Shuanghua actually brought him to the celebrated Art Institute in S City. And even more than that, he hadn’t expected that this normal-looking middle aged man was Xu Shuanghua.

“You’re Teacher Xu Shuanghua?” Gu Mingxi was extremely surprised. Xu Shuanghua was one of the nation’s very famous oil painting masters. Usually, he was a visiting professor at the Art Institute. Being able to meet such a master really made him excited.

Xi Shuanghua smiled a rare smile. He said, “You know who I am?”

“My teacher used to mention you often.” Gu Mingxi’s eyes sparkled. “Teacher Xu, you’ve brought me here because...”



“I want to see your foundation,” Xu Shuanghua said. “There’s a class of freshman who will be sketching bones next class. Draw with them.”

Gu Mingxi was suddenly put on the spot to sketch bones. It had already been many years since he’d sketched that. Being together with a group of freshman students, he felt very nervous. In the end, he didn’t do very well.

Gu Mingxi could see how disappointed Xu Shuanghua was. He knew that he’d drawn terribly. Xu Shuanghua didn’t give any remarks and just drove Gu Mingxi back to the bridge.

When the car was parked, Xu Shuanghua said to Gu Mingxi, “Although I teach at the Art Institute, those students are all just students. They’re not ‘my students.’ Up to now, I’ve only had three students. One opened a studio in Shanghai, another went to Germany to study, and the last went to develop in America. I’m not especially careful about who I take on as a student. I don’t care about all the elaborate, convoluted things. What I’m talking about is fate and talent.”

He looked at Gu Mingxi, “Xiao Gu, you and I had some fate, but I’m sorry, you’re lacking in talent.”

Gu Mingxi got out of the car and carried his backpack on the road as he watched Xu Shuanghua’s car drive off.

He was no longer that fluffy-haired teenaged youth. Gu Mingxi knew that he’d encountered what might have been a life-changing opportunity, but he’d ruined it by not living up to expectations. Then Gu Mingxi thought, that sketch didn’t show his true level. So he shouldn’t give up so easily. He needed to fight for it a bit.

Gu Mingxi liked to draw/paint. That year, the reason he hadn’t tried to test into an art major was because his science scores were very good. To get into a top-tier art school, Gu Mingxi would have needed to spend a year making detailed preparations. And in the end, it wasn’t certain that he’d be able to get into a school. If he didn’t, it would have wasted his good scores, and all would have been for naught.

Because of this chance coincidence, Gu Mingxi was able to meet Xu Shuanghua. He suddenly felt that his life had a new direction. After thinking



about it for a night at home, he decided that he go to convince Xu Shuanghua.

Note: Was trying to figure out where to put this explanation, and here seems a decent place. The title of this chapter is 山重水复, which literally means something like “mountains and rivers again,” so I wrote it as “Endless Mountains and Rivers.” I believe it’s part of the longer phrase (山重水复疑无路, 柳暗花明又一村) which translates to something like, “With the endless mountains and rivers, you may suspect that there is no path out. Then you’ll come across the shade of a tree, bright flowers, and a little village.” It’s like seeing a glimpse of hope after wandering (seemingly) aimlessly, something like that.

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Gu Mingxi stopped going to set up his stall on the bridge. Every day, he went to S City’s Art Institute and stood outside Xu Shuanghua’s office and waited all day.

Xu Shuanghua was a visiting professor so he didn’t go to the school on regular basis. One day he came and was startled to see Gu Mingxi, and then a feeling of dislike appeared.

When he saw Xu Shuanghua, Gu Mingxi immediately followed him. Carrying his sketchbook on his back, he said, “Teacher Xu, I’ve brought some sketches I’ve been practicing. Can you take a look?”

“I’ve already seen your sketch.” Xu Shuanghua didn’t even turn back as he spoke. Gu Mingxi continued to follow him, “Teacher Xu, last time I didn’t draw well because—”

Xu Shuanghua cut him off. “Those who are truly talented will still be able to create a magnificent piece of work even if they haven’t touched a pencil (or brush) in more than ten years.”

“Teacher Xu...”

Xu Shuanghua suddenly stopped. He turned around to face Gu Mingxi. Several months under the sun on the bridge had caused him to become very dark, but his eyes still shined brightly. His lips were dry and chapped. Xu Shuanghua frowned and asked, “How long have you been here?”



Gu Mingxi answered, “The whole day.”

“Have you eaten?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head, but then he nodded. “I brought some bread and ate it at lunch time.”

“Have you gone to the restroom? Can you go on your own?”

Gu Mingxi said quietly, “I can just drink less water.”

“Nonsense!” Xu Shuanghua grew angry. “Gu Mingxi, don’t let me see you again!”

He left in a huff of anger. Gu Mingxi stood there watching his back go.

A few days later, Xu Shuanghua saw Gu Mingxi waiting at his office again. He smiled and said, “Teacher Xu, I’ve brought my tools. I can use the restroom on my own, though it’s a bit slow and tedious. I brought water as well and I drank lots of water today.”

“...” Xu Shuanghua, “What tools?”

“Don’t ask for help (or ‘help yourself’).” Gu Mingxi smiled. “A backscratcher.”

Their confrontation outside his office lasted a moment, and then Xu Shuanghua said, “Xiao Gu, don’t act like this. I’m not a girl (that you’re after). Pestering me like this is pointless.”

Gu Mingxi put away his smile and said, “Teacher Xu, I really want to be your student.”

“Why?”

“I...” Gu Mingxi spoke evenly, “I don’t have arms, and I can’t find work. I have to consider what I can do in the future. I can’t spend the rest of my life on that bridge. I like to draw, and I hope I can become your student. To learn many things, so that I can earn a living off of this.”

He spoke very honestly, but Xu Shuanghua said, “I’m not a charity.”

Gu Mingxi’s face immediately turned unsightly. His chest moved up and down, and then he spoke in a low voice. “Teacher Xu, please give me one more chance.”



Just then, another teacher hurried over. Upon seeing Xu Shuanghua, they said, “Teacher Xu, there’s something I need to discuss with you. The model for today’s drawing class has suddenly gotten sick and can’t come. We can’t find another model in just an hour and a half. Do you think we should adjust the class?”

Xu Shuanghua glanced at him and then turned to look at Gu Mingxi. Suddenly, he said, “I think that a disabled person will have a great visual impact for everyone. Those young kids are probably tired of drawing a wrinkly old man. Maybe if we change to a young model, it will allow their creativity and passion burst out.”

He smiled faintly at Gu Mingxi. “I can give you another chance. Are you willing to be a model?”

When Gu Mingxi stood at the door to the studio, his heart was beating violently.

Then he pushed open the door with his crippled shoulders and slowly entered the room.

Inside the room was more than twenty students, all prepping behind their easels. Someone looked up and saw Gu Mingxi, their eyes filled with surprise.

A young man? This is very strange.

But more surprising was what they saw after Gu Mingxi took off his robe. A muffled exclamation sounded around the room.

Head to toe, Gu Mingxi was only wearing a single pair of grey briefs. More than twenty easels surrounded him, the afternoon sun passing through the windows to shine onto his body.

There were tiny dust particles floating through the air. Gu Mingxi quietly stood in the center of the studio room, his head lowered and his chest moving up and down. After a moment, he closed his eyes a bit and then opened them again, his eyes shining with a firm glow. Slowly, he raised his head, straightened his back, and stretched out his shoulders.

He’d never shown his bare, crippled body to strangers before. The scars in the flesh where his arms had been amputated could be a bit hard for normal people to look at. When he moved his shoulders, those two round bits would move as



well, the bones wriggling under his skin. The stitched up skin in his underarm area also twitched a bit.

During this time, Gu Mingxi was very thin. The skin on his face, neck, and from his knees and down was pretty tanned, but the rest of his body was very pale. A body so dark and light looked rather comical.

He had a pair of slender and powerful legs, a narrow waist, and his bottom stuck out quite a bit. His shoulders were broad but his chest wasn't covered in muscles. At the time, you could even see part of his rib cage.

Gu Mingxi had a distinct facial contour with deep facial features. His eyes looked very stable and calm, as if the room of more than twenty pairs of eyes staring and examining him didn't bother him at all.

Xu Shuanghua didn't position Gu Mingxi in any special pose. Since he didn't have arms, it would've been a bit difficult to create a decent position. Xu Shuanghua let Gu Mingxi stand there casually, head held high and chest out. He stood straight and tall like a tree. His eyes stared blankly, unsure where he should direct his gaze. Under Xu Shuanghua's guidance and in the midst of the sounds of pencil strokes, Gu Mingxi bared his body for the class.

After class, Xu Shuanghua personally helped Gu Mingxi put his robe back on. He gave the young man a pat on his shoulders and said, "Kid, not bad."

When he left the Art Institute, Gu Mingxi didn't want to take the train back, so he walked on the street zoning out. Then he saw a public phone near the entrance to the school.

Gu Mingxi curiously headed over to it. He found a spot to sit and used his face and shoulders to pull off the receiver, and then he pressed in that familiar number.

He didn't pick up the receiver, but instead bent his head over onto it and listened with his ear.

The phone was picked up quickly. Pang Qian's voice sounded on the other end, "Hello, who is this?"

Gu Mingxi didn't respond, but just breathed evenly. Pang Qian asked again, "Hello?"



After a few seconds, she said, “Gu Mingxi, is it you?”

“ ... ”

“Gu Mingxi! Gu Mingxi, I knew it was you! Gu Mingxi!” Her voice shook, carrying a sob. “Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi, don’t hang up! Where are you?! Where is this phone number from? You’re not in Z City anymore? Why are you hiding from me?! What happened? Are you doing back to school in September?”

“ ... ”

She finally calmed down and spoke gently, “Gu Mingxi, listen to me. I know that things might not be going well for you recently. And I can’t help you with it either. But if there’s something on your mind, you can call me. Even if you don’t say anything, that’s okay. I’ll talk to you. Don’t hang up, because I definitely won’t. Gu Mingxi, you have to let me know that you’re living well, okay?”

He answered in his heart, *Okay*.

And then he hung up.

Pang Qian quickly redialed the number. Someone picked up. “This is a public phone... S City... The person on the phone before? Ah, he already left... No arms? What nonsense are you spouting? How many people without arms have you seen before?”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 87

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 87 Before the Dawn

*Mom, don't leave me here all alone.*

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Gu Mingxi became Xu Shuanghua's fourth student. Xu Shuanghua was very busy so Gu Mingxi couldn't visit him every day. The two of them decided to meet twice over the weekend in the afternoons, and Xu Shuanghua would tutor Gu Mingxi one on one.

Gu Mingxi had listened in on Xu Shuanghua's lectures at the Art Institute. He wasn't very enthusiastic and spoke in a very straight-laced manner. In his drawing lessons in the studio though, he was very patient and attentive. But when only Gu Mingxi and Xu Shuanghua were left in the studio, this master turned very strict.

Xu Shuanghua didn't worry that Gu Mingxi had to draw with his feet. In his eyes, whether you drew with you feet, your hands, or your mouth, it was all the same.

He gave Gu Mingxi ruthless critiques, turning his drawings into worthless things. Gu Mingxi just lowered his head in silence. When Xu Shuanghua was done scolding him, he would put on his cold face and continue pointing out Gu Mingxi's deficiencies.

Xu Shuanghua's temper was a bit strange. When he was angry, he was very angry. After he calmed down, he would treat Gu Mingxi very amiably. In front of others, Xu Shuanghua was always a cold person with elegant features. But Gu Mingxi realized that this teacher treated him with the concern and care of a father.

When he wasn't practicing drawing and when he didn't need to go to the Art



Institute, Gu Mingxi still went to that peddler stall on the bridge. His emotions had brightened up, as if things were finally moving forward. Li Han's illness was very stable, and at her three month checkup, there were no signs of tumor growth. Her spirit had also gotten a lot better. After the final round of chemotherapy, she planned to return to Z City to recuperate.

Gu Mingxi was a bit nervous about how to tell Xu Shuanghua this. He had to return to Z City with his mother. After her condition became more stable, he could return to S City and find Xu Shuanghua to learn more.

Gu Mingxi worried that Xu Shaunghua would feel he was being troublesome. He hadn't expected Xu Shuanghua to laugh and say, "No worries. Your mother's health is more important."

He left Gu Mingxi at his house to eat. Xu Shuanghua lived by himself in a large duplex home. His living quarters were upstairs and his studio was downstairs. Instead of asking the housekeeper to make a meal, he personally made a three dish (plus one soup) meal, and he and Gu Mingxi ate together.

It was the first time Gu Mingxi was eating with Xu Shuanghua. He lowered his head and dug into his rice. Xu Shuanghua already got him a bowl of soup.

"Try my mushroom soup," he said.

Gu Mingxi picked up his spoon with his foot and drank a bit. He said, "Tastes good."

Xu Shuanghua gave a modest expression. He said, "My son likes this soup too, but I haven't seen him in many years."

Gu Mingxi was very startled as he lifted his head to look at him. Xu Shuanghua knew that he'd misunderstood him. He quickly explained, "My son's the same age as you. Right now, he's living in England. He was born in May 1984. What about you?"

"August 1984, on Qixi."

Xu Shuanghua smiled. "The reason I said we had fate was because the first day that I saw you was on my son's 21st birthday." He let out a sigh and said, "His mother and I divorced ten years ago. His mother took him to England, and I've only seen him three times since then."



He raised his hand to measure a height in the air. He said, “He was 11 when he left, about this tall. When I saw him again, he was already 14, and he’d grown a lot. The next time I saw him, he was 16. I don’t know how he was eating in England, but he’d gotten a lot fatter. I told him he should lose some weight, and he told me that he would if I stopped smoking. So then I quit smoking. The last time I saw him was on his 18th birthday. I flew over to visit him. He really lost weight, and he’d gotten taller and bigger. Handsome and bright. When I was with him, I even had to look up at him.”

Xu Shuanghua laughed, and then said, “He’s coming to visit this summer. It’s been three years. I wonder how he’ll have changed. Mingxi—” He let out a sigh and pat Gu Mingxi’s shoulder. “I don’t know the situation between your parents. All I know is that when I see you, I think of my own son. Your father lives far away and doesn’t know what kind of life his son is living. But I’m sure that deep down, he’s concerned about you. Some things will be left to god. If I take good care of you, perhaps there will be more people who will treat my son well in England. I hope that you can live healthily, without problems, happily, just like my son, smiling and laughing all day.”

Gu Mingxi stared at him. Xu Shuanghua continued, “Mingxi, when you get back to Z City, don’t draw out on the streets anymore. I know that you want to earn money, but your paintings are worth more than that money. How about this. Later, I will introduce you to a job. I know an editor at a publishing company. We’re good friends. He’d contacted me before about wanting me to introduce him to a student who would help him illustrate a book. The only thing is, you can’t leave your signature on it. You’ll be like a ghostwriter (ghost-artist?) for a well-known illustrator. It’s for a set of six books. The workload is heavy, but the pay isn’t great, maybe 30 thousand when you’re done. You draw animals with a very vivid style. I’m sure that you can do the job.”

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Summer 2005, Gu Mingxi and Li Han finally concluded treatment in S City and returned home to Z City. Xu Shuanghua kept his promise and really introduced him to a job for children’s books’ illustrating.

After Gu Mingxi and the editor had some discussions, he acquired some better paper and painting materials. He went to the Xinhua bookstore and read a lot of



children's illustrated books. Then he started drawing according to his understanding of things.

Li Han didn't have to return to the hospital, and just had to set aside some money for medicine each month. Although they didn't have a lot of money, Gu Mingxi felt that they were living comfortably.

Carrying his backpack, he went to the market for groceries. Sometimes he would buy a fish for his mother or some shrimp. He left all those foods for his mother and only ate plain rice with vegetables.

In the scorching summer, in order to lower electricity costs from running the air conditioning, Li Han slept in Gu Mingxi's room. Gu Mingxi sat at his desk, painting all day and night. He didn't have any experience, so the first pieces he sent to the editor were rejected. After some back and forth and many changes, the art style was finally set, and he kept painting.

In the autumn, Xu Shuanghua drove to Z City to visit Gu Mingxi and Li Han. When he got there, he gave Gu Mingxi 20 thousand dollars and said it was from royalties.

Gu Mingxi and Li Han insisted on having him for meal. Xu Shuanghua was surprised to see Gu Mingxi busy in the kitchen, washing, chopping, and stir frying the vegetables. He wore an apron and carried out his tasks orderly and calmly, as if not having arms didn't affect his life at all.

When they were eating, Xu Shuanghua opened his phone and showed Gu Mingxi the picture he'd taken with his son over the summer. Gu Mingxi looked at the same-aged stranger in the photo. A head of hair bleached blonde, smiling in high spirits, bright and shining.

He suddenly thought of Xie Yi, Zhou Nanzhong, Wang Song. He thought of Jian Zhe, Liu Hanlin, and even Sheng Feng, whom'd he'd met just once. Gu Mingxi felt frightened. That life had already gone so far away from him. The trajectory of his life was already completely different from theirs.

His train was slowly chugging along forward. Going different directions at his side were his old classmates and friends, and even his Pang Pang.

His life slowly settled and calmed down. In those several months, Gu Mingxi



did a stupid thing. On his 21st birthday, he walked very far away and found a public phone. Then he called Pang Qian.

The number was assigned to Z City. Pang Qian didn't need to guess to know who it was. When she picked up the phone, she said, "Gu Mingxi, happy birthday."

Gu Mingxi already felt he was very foolish. He bend his head to the receiver, unable to say anything. Pang Qian knew that he wouldn't say anything, so she quickly started speaking on her own.

"Gu Mingxi, we moved. The compound is going to be demolished. They've already posted the notices and there's no one inside anymore. My dad bought a house in the middle of the city, and we'll probably be able to move in next spring. Our phone number is still the same. If you come back one day, you can call me."

"Last Christmas, Xie Yi and I went to Z City to find you. I left you a note in the rental house. Did you see it?"

"Xiao Yujing left the country. Xie Yi told me that after sophomore year ends, she's going to America. But she'll be in the northeast and Xi Yie's on the west. They still won't be able to meet up. Xie Yi actually didn't get a girlfriend in the past two years. It's really too curious. I wasn't close with Xiao Yujing, but I wanted to ask you. When we were in high school, did she ever tell you what her feelings for Xie Yi were?"

"Gu Mingxi, I haven't been dating either. Sheng Feng from before got together with one of my roommates, Yang Lu. Sheng Feng said that the two of them decided to do postgraduate studies together. I kept thinking about it, but I decided to work for two years after graduation first."

"Gu Mingxi, are you well? Has your mom's illness gotten better? I know that you're listening, so why don't you say anything?" Tears dropped from Pang Qian's eyes. "Two days ago was my birthday. I'm 20 years old, not a child. My wish this year was to be able to find you. Until you come back, my wish every year will be to find you."

"Gu Mingxi, what's your wish this year? What do you wish for on your birthday?"



Gu Mingxi answered in his head— My birthday wish is for you to forget me.

Gu Mingxi worked on that illustrated book set from summer until winter. The day he turned in everything, he let out a sigh.

When he accompanied his mom to the hospital for a checkup, as they were waiting, he excitedly said, “Mom, I received 36 thousand for the project! And the editor said my drawings were good, so in the future, I might be able to work on other books!”

He hadn’t been so happy in a long time. Li Han was also happy for him. “You really have to thank Teacher Xu. The next time you return to S City, send him a gift.”

Gu Mingxi nodded. Sitting beside his mother, he prattled on about his plans to her.

“Right now, I can’t put my name on my artwork. In the future, I’ll have to fight to put my name onto my books. Next year, my goal is to make 100 thousand dollars. If I do that, Mom, then I’ll be able to take care of you.”

“Then you’ll have to work really hard, painting day and night. Your feet will all cramp up.” Li Han affectionately pat Gu Mingxi on the back. “Son, you’re too thin now, and so tanned. What girl will like you?”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “Why do girls have to like me?”

“You’re older now, you should date,” Li Han said. “When the time comes, I’ll ask your aunt to set you up with a girl.”

“Mom, I...”

Just then, Li Han’s doctor came. His complexion looked very poor. Gu Mingxi looked at him, and a bad premonition came to him.

Indeed. The doctor said that another tumor had started growing on Li Han’s liver.

After two surgeries, Li Han’s body wasn’t able to undergo a third one. The doctor explained to her about continued treatment. Then he turned to Gu Mingxi and spoke quietly to him. The tumor was growing very quickly this time and it had spread to other organs. The worst case, Li Han wouldn’t live past



another three months.

Gu Mingxi's world collapsed. He didn't believe the doctor's words and wanted to continue giving Li Han the best medicine. The doctor said that it wasn't necessary to continue taking the expensive medicine anymore. In the last few months, they should let Li Han eat and drink whatever she wanted, to do whatever she wanted, to be as happy as she could.

But Gu Mingxi didn't listen. There wasn't enough money at home, so he started borrowing some, a bit from relatives, and he called Shark and Xu Shuanghua. Shark sent over 30 thousand, but after listening to his explanation, Xu Shuanghua said, "Mingxi, calm down. There are some things you can't force. Even if you spend all this money, it will be meaningless."

Gu Mingxi shouted into the phone, "How can it be meaningless?! She's my mother!"

Xu Shuanghua didn't try to convince him anymore, and he sent over 50 thousand dollars.

Li Han lived in the S City hospital for two months. She really pulled through the three months that the doctor estimated. Gu Mingxi was extremely happy, but then the doctor told them to go home.

He said to Gu Mingxi, "There's no point in further treatment, really."

When Gu Mingxi returned to Z City with Li Han, she already didn't seem like a person.

She was so thin that she was basically just skin and bones. Her hair had all fallen out from the chemotherapy. Her eyes were sunken into her head. Even her lips couldn't join together for her to close her mouth, and a row of teeth was always revealed.

Her skin was jaundiced, and her stomach had swollen a lot. She was in great pain. She couldn't eat anything or sleep at night, and she could only take one painkiller after another.

Huang Lingli wasn't willing to come take care of her. After Li Shiyu came to visit his aunt once, he didn't dare come again. Because Li Han had grown too frightening. When Li Chun came back to Z City to visit her little sister, she



couldn't stop her tears from flowing out when she saw her.

But Gu Mingxi wasn't scared at all. In his eyes, Li Han was still his beautiful and tender mother. Every day, he stayed right next to Li Han and took care of her. He helped her when she needed to urinate or defecate. He helped rub the medicinal oil on her. He fed her and spoke with her. In the evening, he slept on the floor beside her.

Doing things with his feet took a lot of work, but he still worked on it all slowly. Li Han's temperament became strange and irritable. She would throw things at Gu Mingxi and scold at him, but Gu Mingxi never got angry.

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The spring of 2006 would be over soon, and the temperature warmed up. Li Han became more and more fragile. She couldn't eat anything at all, and she was constantly tormented by pain. One evening, Gu Mingxi asked her, "Mom, should I give Dad a call, to have him come visit you?"

This wasn't the first time he'd asked this question, but Li Han refused every time. This time was no different. She shook her head, "No need. There's already no relation between the two of us."

A while later, she said, "Mingxi ah."

Gu Mingxi responded, "Mm?"

"Come here and sleep with me."

Gu Mingxi immediately got onto the bed and lied down beside Li Han. His mother wriggled a bit and reached out her thin arms to embrace him.

"My son..." She reached her hand to touch his face and gently traced his eyes, his nose, his cheeks, his lips. Li Han coughed and said slowly, "When you were young, I went to the temple to worship Buddha. I told Buddha, 'He's so young, but he's lost his arms. What's he to do?' At the time, I thought, if I could take on the burden of a painful life in exchange for you to be healthy and safe, I would agree to it. When I was in so much pain that I couldn't bear it, I thought, Buddha definitely heard my words. He took your suffering and gave it to me. Your future will be very good. Mingxi..."

She held tightly onto Gu Mingxi. "I'm not afraid of dying. I'm afraid of what will



happen to you when I'm gone. What will you do on your own in the world! Mingxi, promise me that if you ever have any problems, you'll go and find your father. Trust me, I understand your father. If you go back to find him, he won't ignore you."

Gu Mingxi didn't say anything. Li Han suddenly said, "When you went to E City last time, did you see your little sister?"

"I saw her." Gu Mingxi lowered his head and nestled his head into Li Han's shoulder. He said, "She looks a lot like Dad. She should be almost two and a half years old now."

"Did you see Pang Qian too?"

"..." Gu Mingxi closed his eyes. "Mm, I saw her."

"Mingxi."

"What is it, Mom?"

"I had a dream yesterday. I dreamed that you and Pang Qian got married and had a baby boy who was very beautiful."

"Mom..."

Li Han's voice carried a smile. "You were both busy with work, so I took care of the child. And then Ai'hua also wanted to take care of him, so the two of us fought about it. Then Shuisheng said there was nothing to fight about. Just have Mingxi and Qian Qian have another child. Then each of us could take care of one, and there wouldn't be any fighting."

This made Gu Mingxi laugh. "Mom, if you really want to take care of a kid, then I'll get married right away and have one for you."

"Talking back to me..." Li Han reached out to pat his head. And then she reached to his back and pat him there, just like she did when he was younger. "Son, this is my life. But you're still young, you have a long path ahead of you. I hope that in the future, when you date and get married, that you will be serious and prudent, and treat your wife well with all your heart and soul. In times of sickness, pain, or suffering, you won't leave her. These words that you say when you get married aren't just for show, they're a kind of responsibility. Not only to



your other half, but also to your children.”

She looked at Gu Mingxi. “Your dad fell short as a father. I don’t want you to become that way. I hope that you will love your wife and your children. No matter what unfortunate things may happen to them, you can’t leave them. Do you hear me?”

Gu Mingxi nodded.

“I also want you to promise me. In the future, when I’m no longer here, you’ll meet a lot of different types of people. Some will be good people, others will be bad people. No matter what kind of people you meet, I hope that you can continue on with a smile. Never abandon yourself to despair. Can you promise me this?”

He said, “I promise.”

“In the future, when your situation gets better, I want you to promise me that you’ll go to see Qian Qian.”

“...”

Li Han smiled. “If she’s still single, you can try to pursue her once.”

Gu Mingxi bit his lip and shook his head. “It’s not possible between the two of us.”

“My foolish son.” Li Han let out a sigh. Gu Mingxi felt that his mother was very excited this evening, in high spirits. He said, “Mom, you had a lot to say. Are you tired? Let’s go to sleep early.”

“Okay. It’s been a long time since you’ve slept with me. It seems like I just blinked my eyes and you grew up.” Li Han smiled happily as she spoke. She didn’t know that right now, she looked very scary when she smiled.

But Gu Mingxi didn’t mind at all. A smile on his lips, he snuggled in beside Li Han. He said, “Mom, it’s been a long time since I’ve hugged you. I’m sorry.”

Li Han said, “In our next lives, be my son again, okay?”

“Okay, we agreed to it,” Gu Mingxi said. “In our next lives, I’ll be your son again. I will hug you every day, and I won’t ever make you angry.”



“Mm...”

That night, Li Han slept exceptionally well. Gu Mingxi woke up twice that night. He looked at his mother, and seeing that her breathing was very even and smooth, he laid back down next to her and slept.

When the sky started to light up and shine into their room, Gu Mingxi opened his eyes. He sat up from the blankets and looked at his mother beside him.

Li Han was lying on her back with her eyes closed. The lips that she often couldn't close were actually closed. This way, her face didn't look so scary. Her lips were even curled up in a smile.

But her face was very pale, without a hint of life at all.

Gu Mingxi bent over to her and used his face to feel hers. He called out, “Mom.”

Li Han didn't respond. Gu Mingxi felt Li Han's forehead with his own. Her body was still warm, not at all cold. He continued calling, “Mom, Mom...”

He bit at the collar on Li Han's clothes. He used his feet to nudge her hands. He gently tapped her body with his foot, as he kept calling, “Mom, Mom. Mom, wake up...”

The weather looked nice outside the window. Spring was ending and summer was starting. Everything was green and the birds were chirping. Gu Mingxi kneeled next to Li Han, tears dropping without a sound.

“Mom, Mom, wake up. What do you want to eat for breakfast? I'll go buy it.” He kept nudging Li Han with his head. “Mom, Mom...”

And then he finally cried out a painful cry. He lied down on the bed next to his mother, his face nestled in her shoulder as his tears gushed out. He closed his eyes and felt the warmth of his mother's body one more time.

He said, “Mom, don't leave me here all alone.”

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 88

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 88 Entering the Workplace

*Team leader, you'd better not start liking me. I have someone I like.*

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In the summer of 2006, Pang Shuisheng went to the bank to take care of some business. When he checked his bank card, he was a bit taken aback.

He went to the counter to ask about it. The bank teller told him that a sum of 21 thousand was remitted into his account from a bank in Z City. It was a cash remittance, submitted anonymously.

Pang Shuisheng knew that something was wrong. He immediately called Gu Guoxiang, though they hadn't contacted each other in two years. Without even a simple greeting, he asked, "Guoxiang, has Mingxi contacted you recently?"

"Mingxi?" Gu Guoxiang asked. "I called him but he canceled his number. Then he called me twice using a public phone, both times to ask for money. What's wrong?"

Pang Shuisheng grew more anxious. "Hurry and check your bank. Does your bank card have extra money?"

Without delay, Gu Guoxiang went to the bank to check his card and found an extra 100 thousand in his account. Extremely startled, he called Pang Shuisheng and asked, "Shuisheng, what's going on?"

Pang Shuisheng hesitated a moment before saying, "I think... that... Ah Han's gone."

That August, Wang Song gave Pang Qian a call. "Xiao Qian, we're having a high school class reunion. Although you were only there for a year, you're still part of Class 2. And since we can't contact Gu Mingxi, you should come for the both of you."



At the reunion, the once 16 or 17 year old youths were now early 20s young adults. Each person had been studying at different schools all across the country. This summer vacation, they all found the chance to get together.

The class head did a good job organizing the event. Most of the students arrived, except for a few particular people. Xiao Yujing and Xie Yi had both gone to America to study. And Gu Mingxi, well, no one knew where he was.

The young Teacher Dai had gotten married and even became a mother. She was extremely happy being able to see this group of kids all grown up. When she sat together with Pang Qian, she asked, “You haven’t heard anything about Gu Mingxi at all?”

Pang Qian was silent for a bit, and then she shook her head slowly.

She wouldn’t tell them about the circumstances of the last call that Gu Mingxi made to her.

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It was an evening several months earlier. Was it spring... or summer? Pang Qian remembered that the day was very hot and stuffy. The bedroom light was off, and then suddenly, her phone rang.

The area code was for Z City. Pang Qian picked up her phone and climbed out of bed. She ran over to the balcony and answered the call. Carefully, she said, “Gu Mingxi.”

She was afraid he would hang up, so she didn’t dare to shout at him. With a coquettish tone, she said, “Gu Mingxi, why haven’t you called me in such a long time?”

As usual, he didn’t say anything. Pang Qian said, “I know that you didn’t go back to B University for classes. I called the teacher there. Gu Mingxi, don’t worry, I won’t say anything about it. I’m sure that you had your own reasons.”

“After this semester ends, we won’t have classes anymore. Next semester, I have to start working. To be honest, I kind of can’t believe that I’ll be working soon.”

She laughed lightly, and then said, “Gu Mingxi, are you well? I really miss you. When you stood me up last time, I was so infuriated, and I thought I would start



ignoring you. But... I still miss you.”

“It’s so late, what are you up to? Our dorm already turned the lights out. Gu Mingxi, how is your mom? My parents are both really worried about her. They keep asking if I’ve heard anything from you. Gu Mingxi—”

*Kacha!* He hung up.

One day, several months later, Pang Shuisheng told her that Li Han might have already passed away.

Sitting together with all these old classmates, Pang Qian didn’t say much. She listened to their own plans for the future. Zhou Nanzhong would try to get a research position (?) at Wuhan, but if he couldn’t, he would try to get into graduate school.

Wang Song and Li Xiaoyan didn’t plan on going to graduate school, but were planning to head back to E City for work. Li Xiaoyan’s family would arrange for her to work in some institution. Wang Song was planning to take the civil service exam.

Jiang Zhiya was interning at the broadcast station in E City over the summer. In order to appear on broadcast, she reluctantly cut off the hair she’d been growing for years. Now she had short hair that looked cool and relaxed. She presented the weather forecast and Zhou Nanzhong teased her and called her “Overcast and Cloudy Little Angel.” Jiang Zhiya was so angry that chased after him to hit him.

Wu Min’s studies were still outstanding. He said he’d applied for several schools abroad and would consider them carefully. After graduation, he would go abroad to continue his postgraduate studies.

...

Later, somehow, they started talking about Gu Mingxi. Jiang Zhiya cried softly and Teacher Dai’s eyes were wet. Gu Mingxi was the most particular/special student she ever had. She still remembered his words from the military training back in Year 1.

Standing in the shade, he lifted his head up high and said, “The ostrich is the world’s largest bird. I believe that I can become a great person.”



Gu Mingxi had steadily gone through those three years. He had a pair of quiet and gentle eyes and a pair of flexible, powerful legs. He didn't speak much, but when he looked at others, he always had a shy smile on his face.

He was also very stubborn and obstinate, he had his persistence. And like most boys his age, there was a girl hidden in his heart.

When others weren't paying attention, Teacher Dai said to Pang Qian, "If one day you find Gu Mingxi, you don't have to say anything to him. Don't ask him where he's been, don't ask him what happened to him all these years, don't ask him if things have been tough or if he's been tired. You just have to give him a hug, and that's all."

School started in September, and Pang Qian was a senior. She didn't have any classes anymore, and everyone was preparing to start work, get into graduate school, or preparing to go abroad. SHUFE's students didn't have to worry for work, and Pang Qian studied finance. She just went to a few recruitment events and three companies gave offers to her.

After consulting with her teacher, Pang Qian chose an international investment banking company located in Lujiazui as the first stop in her career path.

After National Day, she started working.

Pang Qian had bought several sets of formal attire. When she looked at herself wearing them in the mirror, she wanted to laugh a bit.

She took the bus every day and then transferred to the metro. Her hair was chaotically tied up behind her head, her face had a slight trace of makeup, and she wore heels on her feet.

When Pang Qian used to ride the metro when she was studying, she always saw the young people who'd just gotten off of work. They carried their bags and sat or stood on the train car, their faces tired and numb. At the time, she'd giggled with Yang Lu and Wu Feiyan. She thought, these people really knew how to pretend. How could working be that tiring.

When she started working, she realized that when people said being a student was easy, they were right.



Pang Qian's direct supervisor was named Zou Liwen. He was 30 years old, pretty young. He was talented but strict.

His strict wasn't the kind where a person slammed the table and scolded people, but rather he looked at you with a cold, chilling expression, eyes full of contempt for the results of your work. He left you with two words, "Redo it." And without giving a reason, he would just leave.

Pang Qian pulled back her tears and worked overtime until 12 in the morning. The dorms would already be locked and the metro stopped running. She just sprawled out across her desk for the night.

Newbie Pang Qian's work was very, very complicated. Organize the data. Act and learn how to explain the market plans to clients. Make estimation models. Report the structure to her supervisor... One after another, she gave calls to clients, lawyers, and accountants to go over questions. She had to endure the other party's criticisms and also come up with ideas to coordinate and solve the problems. Then she also had to help her supervisor with printing, faxing, ordering food, buying drinks, getting plane tickets...

Zou Liwen treated Pang Qian without much care. Originally, he'd asked for a male, but HR sent him a female. And this girl didn't seem very smart, but a bit outspoken. The only good feelings Zou Liwen had for her was that they were from the same place, both from E City. Zou Liwen decided to just use her for now and if she was no good, he could just send her away after her internship.

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Zou Liwen's opinion of Pang Qian changed that Christmas. Christmas Eve happened to fall on a Sunday. He was working in the office when he suddenly needed a report from Pang Qian. Zou Liwen gave Pang Qian a call and had her send the documents over. Pang Qian was silent a bit and then said, "Team leader, give me half an hour."

Half an hour later, Pang Qian arrived at his office. She was dressed prettily and wore a lot of makeup. There was a slight scent of alcohol on her, and it was obvious she'd been out with her friends.

She anxiously turned on her computer and Zou Liwen said, "It's on your work computer too? You could have just told me which folder it was in, and I could



have gotten it myself.”

“It’s fine, Team leader. I was looking for a reason to leave anyway, I don’t really like drinking.” She sent the files on her computer to Zou Liwen, and then she looked around the office and said, “Team leader, why are you working on Sunday? And it’s Christmas.”

“...” Zou Liwen glanced at her. “The *deadline* for one of the proposals is tomorrow.”

Pang Qian asked, “The one for Hengfang?”

“Mm.”

She said, “Should I help?”

Zou Liwen thought and then said, “Sure. Help me proofread this for any misspellings or wrong words.”

Pang Qian, “...”

They worked until 4 in the morning, and then Zou Liwen invited Pang Qian out for dinner.

Pang Qian giggled loudly, “Team leader, this is breakfast!”

Sitting in a 24 hour fast food restaurant, Zou Liwen and Pang Qian were both hungry and quickly devoured their food. Zou Liwen asked Pang Qian if she was planning on staying in Shanghai for work.

Pang Qian was really a fool as she said truthfully, “I plan to work here for two years first to get some experience. And then I’m going to do postgraduate studies or maybe go back to E City to work.”

Zou Liwen was speechless. “You’re telling your team leader that you’re taking this job as a stepping stone. Is that what you mean?”

Pang Qian, “...”

She stared at him with a pair of dark eyes, looking at him pitifully. She said, “Team leader, I’ve already stayed and helped you work overtime until morning. Don’t fire me, okay?”

Zou Liwen gave a rare smile. He said, “In two years, or maybe just one year, I’m



probably returning to E City and then expand (?) in Hong Kong. If you study well from me for the next two years, I can bring you along if you'd like."

"What's the salary?" Pang Qian's eyes were shining.

Zou Liwen squinted at her and asked, "Do you have any demands?"

"I want the salary you're making right now!"

"You're dreaming."

"Then half of what you make!"

"Should be more than that."

"Deal!"

Pang Qian was extremely excited. She fluttered her eyes and took a sip of cola. Then she turned her head and asked, "Team leader, why do you treat me so well? I just started working three months ago."

Zou Liwen was silent as he rolled his eyes.

It was past 4 in the morning, a strange time. And after a night without sleep, Pang Qian was a bit muddle-headed and her courage was greater than normal. She said, "Team leader, you'd better not start liking me. I have someone I like."

Zou Liwen, "..."

Pang Qian rustled around and pulled out her wallet. She pulled out her ID card and let Zou Liwen see the photo behind it. "Look, I'm serious. It's this person. Isn't he handsome?"

She laughed as Zou Liwen glanced at the photo. Then he turned to Pang Qian, "He..."

"Mm, he doesn't have arms." Pang Qian giggled, a bit shy. "So, Team leader, if you're helping me because you started liking me, I have to apologize to you."

Zou Liwen knocked Pang Qian on the head. "You've drunk too much!"

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 89

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands

### 89 Change of Luck

*Ms. Jiang, this is Pang Qian, Mister Ostrich's Miss Crab.*

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Before the Spring Festival, Pang Qian's family moved to a new house. It was the house that they'd renovated last year. Pang Shuisheng used his hard-earned money to hire a building and design company to take care of the renovations, so their house looked especially nice.

Pang Qian had a bright and stylish room, and her father considerately had a large wardrobe built for her to house all her clothes and shoes.

After the end of the year, Pang Qian returned to Shanghai and continued her internship. Zou Liwen had become a lot more patient while teaching her. He even started taking her along on business trips and let her see the operational flow of the project. Before she had to present her thesis for graduation back at school, Pang Qian was already able to complete some smaller tasks on her own.

In May, the class went to the Shengsi Islands for their graduation trip. They went to the sea, watched the sunrise, ate seafood... Yang Lu and Sheng Feng held hands and took a romantic walk along the seashore, and their joyous laughter could be heard from afar. Pang Qian stood in the distance and watched their figures walking away. Wu Feiyan walked over to her side and started chatting with her.

She wrapped her arm around Pang Qian's waist and said, "Hey, Crab, tell me the truth. Does seeing the two of them make you feel a bit uncomfortable?"

"Why would I feel uncomfortable?" Pang Qian laughed and shook her head. "No, really."

Wu Feiyan said, "I wonder if Sheng Feng's going to stay in Shanghai after he



finishes his postgrad degree though.”

“Probably.” Pang Qian lifted her head and looked up at the blue sky. She stretched her arms out and put on a bright smile. “If two people want to be together, they’ll figure something out in the end. Let’s just wait for our invitations to their wedding banquet!”

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Pang Qian smoothly graduated in June. She wore her graduation cap and gown and took lots of pretty graduation pictures. Pang Shuisheng and Jin Ai’hua were both extremely excited at her graduation ceremony. Pang Shuisheng’s face was glowing. Watching their little naughty daughter become the beautiful and good person before them now, their hearts were bubbling with happiness.

Pang Qian became the positive example in her family, the one you show as an example when teaching your kids. Although Pang Qian wasn’t the most studious among the kids in their (extended) family, she’s the one who improved herself the most.

Everyone knew that Pang Qian’s track record in school wasn’t that great ever since primary school. She was a glutton and loved to play, and she’d been beaten and scolded many times by Jin Ai’hua and Pang Shuisheng. She’d once been at the bottom of her class in junior high, and she’d even been ranked last in her class in high school before. For all of her first year in high school, she was always ranked among the bottom of her class. Pang Shuisheng would always come home angry after the parent-teacher meetings.

Everyone thought that Pang Qian getting into a top high school was luck, that she’d only get into a tier-3 university at best. But then later, she got into a top university and graduated with a job at an international investment company. Jin Ai’hua’s older sister asked her, “Will Pang Qian make 5,000 each month after she becomes a full-time worker?”

Jin Ai’hua harrumphed. “5,000? Are you kidding?!”

“Not even 5,000? Qian Qian’s in Shanghai, so she should make at least 5,000 to survive. If she doesn’t make that much, shouldn’t she just return to E City and find work for 3-4,000? She could save on rent and live with you guys.”

Jian Ai’hua laughed, her chin raised up in the air. “Our Qian Qian will have an



annual salary of 250 thousand. That's 20 thousand a month, 20 thousand!"

"Aiyoyoyo!" Jin Ai'hua's sister was taken aback. "What bank does she work for? Her salary is so high!"

Jin Ai'hua stuck her nose in the air, "She's at an international investment bank, an investment bank! An international one, do you understand!"

Pang Qian rented an apartment in Pudong and took the metro to work every day. Her office building was nearby the Oriental Pearl Tower, so she saw that tall, magnificent tower every day through her window.

A few years ago, she'd stood at that tower and pointed to the tall buildings around it, saying, "I'm going to work there in the future!"

And several years later, here she really was.

Only, there'd been someone standing beside her back then. And now, she didn't even know where he was anymore.

Pang Qian began her career, and work was more busy than she'd ever imagined. Sometimes, even while working in the office, she had to run around. Her apartment really became a place that was just for sleeping. Pang Qian had to work overtime nearly every day, or else go to social work gatherings, and sometimes she'd have to go on business trips. She got a passport and an entrance permit to Hong Kong and Macau. The first time she went to Hong Kong, she played at Disneyland, Ocean Park, and went shopping for lots of things. The next time she went, she also bought a pile of things. She finally calmed down the fifth time she went.

The company arranged a trip abroad every year. At the end of 2007, Pang Qian left the country for the first time and went to Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. She returned to E City for the Spring Festival and brought a whole bunch of gifts – perfume, skin care products, Disney toys, watches....

The entire family went to Pang Shuisheng's bright and spacious new house for the New Year's dinner. Everyone complimented Pang Qian for being pretty, having nice skin, having a good temperament, and doing do well at work.

Her younger uncle said, "Raising a daughter like Pang Qian is what it means to successfully accomplish something. Pang Qian, now your parents only need to



worry about your marriage.”

Pang Qian said, “Uncle, I’m not even 23 years old yet.”

“You can start looking though. Date for two years and get married at 25. Just perfect.”

Pang Qian laughed out loud, “I’m very busy with work now. There’s no time to date at all.”

Her younger aunt gently nudge Jin Ai’hua and whispered to her ear, “Sister-in-law, Pang Qian isn’t still caught up in the past, is she? That boy without arms who used to live next door to you?”

Jin Ai’hua’s complexion changed as she coldly said, “Nonsense! There’s no such thing!”

Pang Qian was truly very busy, such that she wasn’t even able to get together with her old school friends. On the weekend, she went shopping with Wu Feiya, who asked her if she was really still waiting for that “missing boyfriend.” Pang Qian thought for a moment and then said, “Let me tell you something. In the beginning, there was a guy at the company who seemed to be interested in me. He always tried to invite me out. One afternoon, he called me to eat lunch together at the noodle shop downstairs, so I went.”

“And then what?”

“It was just the two of us eating noodles. He ordered kimchi and beef noodles, and I ordered braised beef noodles. After our orders came out, we ate. After we ate a little, I did a naughty thing.”

“What?”

Pang Qian smiled and said, “I told him that my braised beef noodles were really delicious and asked if he wanted to try some. He said no, but I didn’t listen to him, and put some of my noodles into his bowl. I told him to try it, that it was really delicious.”

Wu Feiyan frowned, “You’re so gross. They’re noodles that you ate. How could you give them to someone else to eat after that?”

“I did it on purpose. Didn’t he say he liked me?” Pang Qian looked strangely at



Wu Feiyan. “When you’re eating with your boyfriend, you wouldn’t eat anything in his bowl?”

“I’m kind of a germaphobe, so I wouldn’t.” Wu Feiyan, “What happened after that?”

“Then that guy went crazy. He just stopped eating and said he was full.” Pang Qian laughed out loud for a bit. When she stopped, she said, “Feiyan, was I really bad? Actually, I wouldn’t eat the food in his bowl either, whether he’d eaten from it or not. I don’t even eat the things from my parents’ bowls. But in this world, there is one person whose bowl I would eat from. And I’m sure that he would similarly agree to eat from my bowl.”

The global financial crisis hit in 2008, which heavily affected the industry. Many companies were laying off employees, and a few in Pang Qian’s department were even let go. She went to work in constant fear of being laid off, but Zou Liwen always protected her.

In 2009, the economic situation grew a bit better. Zou Liwen asked Pang Qian privately as he was planning on quitting and returning to E City. He would jump from department manager to vice president of a company. Pang Qian didn’t have any hesitations and readily agree with his decision. Although she would get a raise and promotion if she stayed on, Pang Qian felt very grateful to Zou Liwen. She was thankful that in the bleakest year, he still stood in front of her and protected her. His salary was even affected by it a bit. Pang Qian had always been a passionate person. She knew that if Zou Liwen were to quit his job here, he’d have to build his own personal circle of trust. And she was going to be one of those loyal soldiers.

At the end of the year, Pang Qian followed Zou Liwen as they resigned from work. Before she left Shanghai, she ran over to the Bund and found a digital photo place and spent 20 dollars for a photo of herself against the Huangpu River and Oriental Pearl Tower.

The picture taken date was printed in the bottom right-hand corner: 2009/12/5.

Pang Qian opened her phone and looked at a photo in her album. The same scenery on a small Polaroid, the color faded quite a bit. In the photo, there were



two kids standing next to each other, smiling happily. The date: 1999/7/17.

Her fate with this city started the summer of that year. It was ten years later now, and she was leaving this place. She felt a bit regretful. She once made a promise with someone that she would traverse all the corners of the city, eating all the delicious foods and seeing all the beautiful views. She even hinted that she'd give him an answer when they got to college.

But in the end, she was here by herself, spending six years alone in this city.

Pang Qian returned to E City with her luggage in tow, just as she'd once told Gu Mingxi. After three years of experience at an investment banking firm, she was armed with many skills as she entered Jialai Investments. She was even able to manage her own project. She went on a business trip on her own, calmly going about, dragging her luggage behind her in an unfamiliar city. She shed that young and inexperienced student air. A smile brightly shining on her face, she would no longer be able to bring back that pureness and simpleness she once had.

Pang Qian got her driver's license and bought a car. She had numerous high heels and lots of beautiful clothes and jewelry. When she had a little bit of free time, she would go shopping or have a meal with Zheng Qiaoqiao. Zheng Qiaoqiao graduated with a degree in English, so she was working at a foreign enterprise. Her salary was quite good. There was also Sun Mingfang, who'd become an accountant. She was also single and she often had coffee or played ping pong with Pang Qian.

Pang Qian quietly passed her 25th birthday. Since that night that Gu Mingxi called her, she hadn't received another call from Z City for four years.

Even after returning to E City for half a year, she still kept the phone number she'd registered in Shanghai. You could temporarily stop service for your phone in E City, but if you stopping your service in Shanghai was permanent.

After dinner, she went out alone and walked until she reached the Golden Compound. Of course, the compound was already gone.

The shopping / business center had been completed and was now the newest hub of E City. Pang Qian walked around the square. On the light summer day, a group of elderly ladies had put on some loud music and were twisting and



dancing around. Across the way, a few young teachers were teaching a group of kids to skate.

There were lots of small shops and peddlers at the square along with residents out for a walk. Pang Qian saw a man selling sausages and quickly walked over. She spend 1.50 for a skewer.

After just a single bite, Pang Qian immediately spit it out. This wasn't a sausage, it was clearly flour. (Note: I'm guessing this is like a corn dog then.)

She suddenly started laughing and laughing until tears came out. She decided to finish the sausage. Many years ago, this was something extremely delicious in her eyes. She couldn't eat it and could only look at it. Then the person beside her would always say, "Alright, stop looking. Your saliva's dripping. There's some money in my pocket. Take it out yourself and buy a stick."

The fountain in the square suddenly started, clear water spraying out, as if dancing along with the festivities. A lot of children gathered around the fountain, playing around. Pang Qian stood off to the side with her arms folded. She smiled as she watched a bit, and then she looked up to the sky.

The Milky Way wasn't very clear, but in such an open space, she could actually see it.

Pang Qian knew she was very silly. A lot of people called her a fool. Yan Lu, Wu Feiyan, and Sheng Feng didn't know that person. If they wanted to call her a fool, then so be it. But why did Zheng Qiaoqiao, Sun Mingfang, Zhou Nanzhong, and Wang Song also call her a fool?

China was so large, with some billions of people. And that person was hiding somewhere among them. Pang Qian knew that he was on his own right now. She could even guarantee that he'd always been single. She imagined how difficult his life must be, but she believed he wouldn't let go, that his face still carried that smile and warmth.

She didn't know how she'd be able to find him. She tried Kaixin001, Renren (social networking sites), and her school's networking site, but it was obvious that he'd never logged in to these places.

She didn't even know what city he was in now, or what kind of work he was



doing. He didn't have a college degree, and that made Pang Qian disheartened.

She looked back up at the Milky Way, silently making a wish.

I want to find Gu Mingxi. I want to find Gu Mingxi. I want to find Gu Mingxi.

In December 2010, Zou Liwen sent Pang Qian up north on a business trip. She dragged along her luggage and went there alone, staying for two weeks. As she was about to return home, a large snow storm hit.

Advertisement

Pang Qian and Yu Jialei came out from the dining room, both heading to their car. It was nearly Christmas so all the shops on the street were filled with decorations. (Note: This is roughly where end of ch.71 / start of ch.72 left off, before we started the trip into the past.)

Pang Qian looked around absently when her phone rang. She picked it up and was immediately happy. "Hey, it's you? Xie Yi."

"Are you in E City?" Xie Yi's voice carried a joyous tone. "I'm stopping in to E City tomorrow for some work. Let's grab a meal together."

"Tomorrow? Okay," Pang Qian said. "Call me when you get here. We'll pick a place, my treat."

"Okay, I'm driving. See you tomorrow."

Xie Yi hung up the phone, feeling quite refreshed.

That morning, there was a meeting at work where one department was reporting about their recent project. They started talking about TV and film rights to a story. Xie Yi wasn't interested at first, until an employee said the name of the story— My Miss Crab.

Xie Yi felt a sudden emotion and quickly told the employee to bring him the illustrated book.

The employee told him about how hot the book was recently. The author was very popular but also very mysterious. A lot of companies were trying to get the rights for TV and film production and the price was skyrocketing.

Xie Yi was currently the boss at a media company. They produced promotional and serial content. Eight of their productions weren't very successful, but two



were really popular, making their company some money.

Xie Yi quickly flicked through “My Miss Crab,” and was so excited that he couldn’t help calling Pang Qian. He grabbed at his hair, and tried to figure something out.

The next day, Pang Qian slacked off again. She sat at her desk, flipping through the illustrated book for the nth time. She read through the final part over and over again.

<My Miss Crab>

Mister Ostrich’s mother left him. She became an angel and flew to the heavens.

Before Mister Ostrich’s mother left, she promised him that in their next lives, they would be reunited as mother and son.

Now, Mister Ostrich was left on his own. He wondered, what should he do?

Brother Shark told him that he could go find Miss Crab.

Mister Ostrich shook his head. He had/was nothing now. Even if he found Miss Crab, what would be the point?

Mister Ostrich thought, the first thing he had to do was to become self-reliant.

...

Mister Ostrich liked the warmth of the southern regions, so he went to the southernmost island in the animal kingdom.

In that place, there was a beautiful and large sea, a fine and sandy beach, simple and honest islanders. All year long, he could wear light clothes. Mister Ostrich finally left that cold north. He felt that he would never need to feel the cold again.

Mister Ostrich found simple but happy work. In his spare time, he could use his skills to earn extra money. And so, his days passed just like that. Mister Ostrich’s life got back on track. He didn’t need to be cold or starve. He even had his own ostrich nest.



Everything that had passed felt like a dream. If he told this story to other people, they'd probably just feel that Mister Ostrich was very pitiful.

But Mister Ostrich wasn't pitiful. Right now, he was very happy. You ask, does he remember Miss Crab?

Of course, he remembered he very deeply.

This story has yet to end. Mister Ostrich has created two conclusions.

The first. After time passed, Mister Ostrich completely lost his Miss Crab. And Miss Crab could never find her Mister Ostrich. The two of them walked their own, different paths. One went left as the other went right. Many years later, neither recalled that lost age of youth.

The second. Mister Ostrich remembered his mother's words. Mama Ostrich said that one day, he could go to find Miss Crab. If she were still single, he could try to pursue her again.

Every time Mister Ostrich imagined the scene, he couldn't help smile, because it was really just too perfect.

But no one understood the cruelty of the world better than Mister Ostrich. A lot of beautiful things in life had false appearances, and a lot of the once beautiful things had now shattered to pieces.

Was Miss Crab single right now? Mister Ostrich didn't know. He just felt that he'd already disappeared from her life for so many years now. How could he just suddenly appear and disturb her life now?

So, this is a story left to be continued.

Or maybe there would never be an answer.

– Mister Ostrich, Qixi 2010

After she got off work, Pang Qian grabbed her bag and charged to the first floor. Xie Yi was already there waiting.

Pang Qian felt something was amiss when she saw him, because his smile was especially sly. He dragged Pang Qian to his car and just kept smiling strangely without a word.



Pang Qian didn't know what to say. "Did you take the wrong medicine? What are you smiling about?"

"I found out a big secret!"

"What is it?"

"Hey Crab, did you know that there's this very popular illustrator-author?"

Pang Qian was extremely disappointed. "I knew awhile ago. Gu Mingxi! Don't you have anything better to do?"

"Wow, you already knew?!" Xie Yi was even more disappointed. "Ah, whatever. I have another bombshell for you!"

He pulled Pang Qian to a particularly foreign feeling teahouse. They walked inside, turned a corner, and made their way to an elegant looking private room.

There was already a woman sitting inside, about 30 years old, her face extremely graceful. When she saw Xie Yi, she stood up. "CEO Xie, hello. I'm Jiang Qi."

Xie Yi shook hands with her calmly and exchanged business cards. Then he introduced Pang Qian and Jiang Qi.

"Pang Qian, this is Jiang Qi, Wenlan Publishing's editor and the sole editor in charge of Mister Ostrich's works."

Pang Qian was shocked.

And then he said to Jiang Qi, "Ms. Jiang, this is Pang Qian, Mister Ostrich's Miss Crab."

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 90

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 3. The Tenderness of a Pair of Hands 90 Perfect Ending

*Are you satisfied with the ending I drew?*

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Enthusiastic fans of “My Miss Crab” started a Tieba (like a forum site) thread for the story. The most popular question posted there was whether or not Mister Ostrich should try to find Miss Crab.

Pang Qian spent every day hanging around the thread, checking to see the new responses to the question. Most of the community members encouraged Mister Ostrich to once more pursue Miss Crab. Some users were extremely pressing. The lengthy expositions, and even some of the more frightening coercive posts, made Pang Qian want to both laugh and cry. She felt extremely touched.

She’d gotten lots of calls from old friends as well. They all excitedly told her, “Crab! Have you seen this really hot book? The author is Gu Mingxi!”

There were a lot of interesting messages on the Tieba thread.

Old Farmer: Don’t know if the author will see what I have to say. I’m probably a bit older than you. I once had a green plum in my youth too (Note: green plum is part of the phrase used for the female counterpart of childhood friends/sweethearts), but I didn’t know whether or not she liked me. I wasn’t even able to write her a love letter like you did. I didn’t say anything at all to her. After the college entrance exams, we both went our separate ways and didn’t contact each other much. The reason I ended up reading your book was because last month, she’d sent me a copy in the mail. After I read it, I finally realized what she wanted to tell me. Author, if Miss Crab is still in your heart, I support you in going to find her again. There are some things you’ll regret in the future if you don’t do them now. Right now I’m still single, but my green plum already has a family. I suspect that if I’d read this book several years earlier, I’d have mustered



up my courage to find her.

Grilled Oyster: I know who Mister Ostrich is!!! But I'm not telling you guys!! Haha!! Will Mister Ostrich see this? Let's send a signal! Machine factory, barbecue shop, hahaha! I'm already a dad, and she can nearly run now. Hurry up and get together with Crab!

So Handsome the Wind's in Chaos: Gugugu... Ostrich Gu???? I sat in front of you in high school! The more handsome one! I'm working in Colombia now. What are you fucking doing? Do you know how many years everyone's been looking for you? That ugly deskmate of mine, Wang Wang Wang and Little Swallow are getting married soon. You'd better hurry back for their wedding banquet!

Stupid Cunt Upstairs: Ostrich, you better not come to my wedding! Watch me beat you up! From(?) the Stupid Cunt Upstairs!

Sweet Coffee: Haha, seems like a lot of people already guessed who Mister Ostrich is! Actually, I know who he is too. Ostrich, hurry up and go find Crab. If you don't come back, someone else is going to snatch up the crab!

Passerby A: Why do so many people want Mister Ostrich to go back and find Miss Crab? I keep thinking that it's not bad that the story has ended here. The two of them both have their own lives. Why keep tying them down to the memories they had as kids? Life is cruel and realistic. Who's to say that, even if they get back together, that there won't be some barrier between them after being separated for so long? In the end, their good memories might all be erased. Wouldn't that be more terrible?

I Have Ears: You say that because you don't know them.

Fat and Strong Clam: Whoever dares tell Ostrich not to come back to find Crab, let me have a talking to them!!!

...

Pang Qian went to Zou Liwen's office and said, "Team leader, I want to take some time off."

"Time off?" Zou Liwen asked. "How long?"



He knew Pang Qian. If she wanted to take one or two days off, she wouldn't approach him so earnestly.

Indeed. Pang Qian said, "Two weeks."

"..." Zou Liwen sat behind his desk, glaring at her. "You know the end of the year is really busy, don't you?"

Pang Qian nodded. "I know. I'll take care of everything."

Zou Liwen thought about it for awhile and flipped through the calendar on his desk. He said, "Starting tomorrow, two weeks. No more."

Pang Qian smiled, "Thank you Team leader!"

Advertisement

During Christmastime, most of China was gloomy and cold. But in Sanya, Hainan, it was as warm as spring.

On Saturday, Gu Mingxi got up early. After washing up, he went to the kitchen to make breakfast.

An hour later, the scent of congee floated in the air. He turned off the fire and went to wake up Dou Dou.

Dou Dou was a 7 year old boy and he liked sleeping in late. Gu Mingxi called him several times and he curled himself up into a ball in his blankets.

"Let me sleep a little longer." With his eyes closed, Dou Dou writhed around on his bed. Gu Mingxi lifted a leg and kicked his bottom. "Who's the one that said yesterday that he wanted to eat century egg and meat congee?!"

Dou Dou rolled around on his bed, and then he finally opened his hazy eyes. Gu Mingxi grabbed the clothes at the head of the bed with his foot. "Hurry and put your clothes on. Brush your teeth and go pee. Then help me serve the congee."

Dou Dou was very obedient. He slipped on his clothes and went to wash up. When he was done, he headed to the kitchen. Gu Mingxi watched him and said, "Be careful, it's hot."

He's already prepared a bowl for Dou Dou. Dou Dou scooped the congee from the pot to the bowl and carried it to the table. Then he went back and prepared another bowl for Gu Mingxi.



He was a young child, but he already understood many things and could do a lot.

One big and one small person sat at the table to eat their congee. Gu Mingxi said to Dou Dou, "Today, I have to go out a bit, so I won't be back for lunch. Go over to Teacher Ji's place to eat."

Dou Dou lifted his eyes to look at him. "Where are you going?"

"To see someone. The Auntie Jiang that you met last time."

Dou nodded, "Teacher Gu..."

He bit the spoon in his mouth, his expression a bit hesitant. Gu Mingxi asked, "What is it?"

"Everyone said that you're leaving." Dou Dou looked at Gu Mingxi, his eyes a bit red. "Is it true? Are you really leaving?"

Gu Mingxi smiled. He bent over and took a sip of his congee. "Who told you that?"

"Teacher Ji, Teacher Chen, Teacher Wang... They all said it." Dou Dou's voice was very quiet, his spirits low. "Teacher Gu, if you leave, what will I do?"

"Dou Dou, don't worry about that now. To be honest, I haven't decided anything yet." Gu Mingxi didn't treat Dou Dou as a child. He didn't try to beat around the bush or lie to him. He said, "If I leave, it's because I have a new goal and plan. It's not to leave you behind. If I leave, I'll definitely make sure to put you into good hands."

Dou Dou's tears started falling. "But I don't want to go home..."

Gu Mingxi handed (footed?) a napkin over to him. "Don't cry. You're a boy, you can't love crying so much."

Dou Dou sniffled as he wiped away his tears. Someone knocked on the door. Gu Mingxi turned, "Come in."

The door opened and Ji Xiu'er poked her head in. "Teacher Gu."

Gu Mingxi smiled at her. "Teacher Ji, have you eaten breakfast yet? I made some congee. Let's eat together."



Ji Xiu'er walked inside. She was a young female teacher, her face rosy red. "That's okay, I've already eaten. I wanted to ask you if you had time this morning? Something's wrong with my computer again, so I wanted to ask if you could help me reload it."

Gu Mingxi apologized, "I'm sorry, I have a meeting at 10. I probably won't be back until after lunch."

"Oh, it's like that." Ji Xiu'er seemed very disappointed. Gu Mingxi said, "I can help you out in the afternoon. If it's urgent, you can ask Teacher Chen about it. He also knows how to reconfigure it."

Ji Xiu'er quickly said, "There's no rush, no rush. I'll wait for you to come back in the afternoon."

After eating breakfast, Dou Dou went to wash the bowls. Gu Mingxi prepared to head out, changing his clothes in his room. After Dou Dou wiped off the table, he put the leftover congee into a large bowl, covered it, and put it into the refrigerator. When Gu Mingxi came out dressed, he was already sweeping the floor.

Gu Mingxi felt warm inside and gently said, "Dou Dou, you can stop after you're done sweeping. I'll take my shoes off when I get back. Put on your backpack and head over to Teacher Ji's dorm. Have her go over your writing."

Dou Dou pouted. "I want to stay at home." He always called Gu Mingxi's and his small place "home," though he'd only lived there for about two years.

"You can't. You'll just watch TV and play games on the computer." Gu Mingxi wasn't going to be fooled. "Hurry up, I'm going to be late."

They walked outside. This was Sanya's Hope Primary School. It wasn't very large. The school building was two stories high, and there was also a concrete playground area, both funded by corporate donations. There weren't many teachers at the school. There were a few older, unionized teachers who headed home every day. The young, single teachers weren't in a union, but were free agents with meager wages. The school prepared a dorm for them. It was a small house, one person to a room, with a shared bathroom and kitchen.

Because Gu Mingxi's situation was particular and he also took care of Dou



Dou, the school took special care of him and gave him a small place that had its own kitchen and bathroom. Although it was a simple place, it was enough for him and Dou Dou to live happily.

Gu Mingxi asked Ji Xiu'er to prepare Dou Dou's lunch and help revise his language skills. After relaying this, he left the school grounds.

Dou Dou glanced over at Ji Xiu'er. "Teacher Ji, your computer already broke three times this month. If it can't be fixed, you should just buy a new one."

Ji Xiu'er, "Be quiet! (lit. You're saying too much / speaking out of turn) Let me see your essay!"

Gu Mingxi rode the bus to his destination. With a messenger bag on his shoulder, he found his meeting place with Jiang Qi.

It was a cafe on the second store of the building, decorated very chicly. There was a large outdoor terrace, and the owner had set up several wooden tables there. The shining winter sun was extremely comfortable, so the owner didn't set up the umbrellas for shade. The warm sun streamed onto the terrace. Gu Mingxi squinted and walked toward Jiang Qi.

Business in the coffee shop was light before noon. Jiang Qi was the only person sitting on the terrace. She quickly greeted him, "Hi, Xiao Gu."

Gu Mingxi sat down across from her and pulled off his bag. He ordered a cup of iced coffee and asked, "Jiang Qi, are you taking advantage of Christmas to come here for a vacation?"

"Hahaha! That's right, traveling with the people's money." Jiang Qi laughed happily. "Xiao Gu, I haven't seen you in awhile. How have you been lately?"

"Same as always." Gu Mingxi shrugged. "Final exams are around the corner. You know, I teach a lot of classes. It's a bit tiring. And Dou Dou is very unruly. Kids his age have so much energy to burn off. He's like a pond loach (Note: From Wiki, "...their ability to detect changes in barometric pressure and react with frantic swimming...") Although he doesn't ask for many things, since I took him home, I should raise him well. I usually take him out to play, go roller skating, go eat KFC, ah... Being a dad is a hard job (Note: I think the term used is usually for stay-at-home or maybe single dads.)"



As he spoke, he started smiling. Jiang Qi said, "So now you know it's not easy raising a child. My daughter's 3 years old, and she makes me run around in circles. I really admire you. A big kid taking in a little kid to raise him."

Gu Mingxi laughed out loud. "Dou Dou really understands a lot of things. And there are bound to be inconveniences in my daily life, so having him beside me is very helpful. Don't just look at him like a kid." He recalled two years ago and said, "Qi, you didn't see what Dou Dou was like before. If I didn't bring him out, I would have had an uneasy conscience."

Jiang Qi nodded. "I know. You've told me before."

After they were silent for a bit, Gu Mingxi asked, "Qi, has work been busy recently?"

"Yeah, of course it's busy! I've been super busy with all your things!" Speaking of this, Jiang Qi's eyebrows jumped up. She asked, "By the way, Xiao Gu, have you considered what I talked to you about before on the phone?"

"TV rights?" Gu Mingxi thought for a moment and shook his head. "I think, it's better to... forget about it."

"Why? Jimmy (Liao) and Zhu Deyong both sold rights to their illustrations, and the adaptations were pretty good," Jiang Qi said. "Because you've never appeared in public, all the production companies are coming to me. It's like I've become your manager. Recently, several companies have discusses with me, and the numbers they're giving are tempting. For a newcomer like yourself, it's definitely a large amount of money."

"It's not about money," Gu Mingxi said. "Rather, this story doesn't have an ending. When I first drew it, I put forth a lot of courage as well. I didn't want to publish it in the beginning. After illustrating several books, I just wanted a break and decided to tell my own story. I didn't expect it to garner such attention, really."

"The office is filled with stuff that your fans mailed in. I'll send all of it over to the school later. Don't be surprised, there's really several boxes of stuff," Jiang Qi said. "Xiao Gu, what are you thinking now? Are you planning on leaving this story unfinished?"



Gu Mingxi lowered his head in thought. His coffee arrived and he drank a bit with a straw. The cold, sweet taste stimulated his taste buds. He said, "This is the ending that I had planned from the beginning. Regardless of what conclusion I came up with, it always felt like once the words were written and set, her and my story would be over."

He let out a light sigh as he stirred his straw in his cup of coffee, the ice clinking against the glass. He continued, "I don't want to sell the rights because I don't know what kind of ending they'll make. For the sake of ratings, I suspect it will be a reunion, but the reality is that the ending isn't so beautiful and satisfying."

Jiang Qi asked, "So what are you planning to do now? I always thought that after you finished drawing this story, you'd go to find Miss Crab."

"That's what I thought before too." Gu Mingxi smiled so that his eyes curved. "At the time, I felt that I wasn't in such a poor state. But after I thought about it carefully, I felt that I wasn't quite ready yet."

"What do you mean not ready?"

Gu Mingxi didn't answer her directly, but instead asked another question. "Jiang Qi, do you have a group of friends right now who grew up with you since you were a kid? Males or females. The point is that you were really good friends before, almost inseparable, and you're still very close friends today. I don't mean just ordinary friends or classmates."

Jiang Qi thought it over and said, "There's a primary schoolmate, a woman. When we were younger, we were so close, we were nearly a single person. In junior high, we were separated, but then we were in the same class again in high school. We became even closer then, and we agreed to go to the same college. But her school results weren't as good as mine. I went to study abroad for my undergraduate degree and she went to a three year college. By the time I graduated and returned home, she was already working. We still occasionally contact each other, and we meet maybe two or three times a year. We have a meal together and go shopping. She's probably my longest friend."

Gu Mingxi asked, "Then are you still close with her?"

"Close?" Jiang Qi didn't understand. "What do you mean by close?"



“You can tell each other any and everything, regardless of the consequences.”

“Oh! How could that be!” Jiang Qi took a sip of her coffee. “You’d have to be so very lucky to find a friend like that.”

“Exactly, that’s what I think too.” Gu Mingxi smiled. “Qi, it’s not that I don’t have the courage to find her. Rather, going back to find her is a very easy thing. We’ll say ‘Hi, how are you? Long time no see.’ And then we’ll go out for a meal and drink some coffee. That’s all very easy. But what comes after that isn’t easy. I can’t really be considered a lucky person, but I’ve always been glad for the wonderful years of my youth, for the considerate girl who was always by my side. I don’t want to mess up the memories we have together, so whether she’s single or already taken, I still think that I shouldn’t go intrude in her life. We’ve already (crossed paths and) missed out on each other, and we can’t go back.

Jiang Qi smiled. “Have you ever considered that with how well your book is selling now, that maybe she’s already seen it. And maybe you’ve already disturbed her life?”

Gu Mingxi lifted his eyes to her, his lips curling up slightly, a bit of resentment crawling into his eyes. “I said I didn’t want to publish it, but you’re the one who insisted on it.”

“Ha! You’re the one who came to me.” Jiang Qi glared at him. Then she said, “Oh right. I brought along a gift from a fan this time, and it’s a bit particular.”

She lifted a large book from the chair beside her and pushed it towards Gu Mingxi. Then she got up and said, “Take your time. I’m going to the restroom.”

Gu Mingxi didn’t respond because he’s already been startled by the picture on the cover of the book before him.

Advertisement

It was an A4 sized sketchbook, with a craft paper cover. On the cover, there was a watercolor image. That’s right, watercolor.

A red crab baring its claws, sitting on the back of an earthy-colored ostrich. The clumsy brush strokes weren’t exactly appealing, but just because it wasn’t well painted, it didn’t mean the artists hadn’t put in effort. She probably copied the image. The ostrich had slight traces of feathers. But Gu Mingxi thought, Dou



Dou probably painted better than this.

The crab and ostrich both looked up at the sky, the Milky Way— If Gu Mingxi was understanding this correctly, those wavy lines in a circle should be the Milky Way. There were also stars in the sky, the five pointed kind that teachers always drew on corrected assignments. On either side of the Milky Way, there was a star. Under the two stars were the words “cowherd” and “weaver girl.” (Note: Two lovers separated by the Milky Way.)

On the cover were three words, large and handwritten with a black pen.

<My Mister Ostrich> by Miss Crab

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and flipped the page with his mouth.

Hi Mister Ostrich, how are you.

For the several years that Mister Ostrich wasn't by Miss Crab's side, Miss Crab appeared to have lived a beautiful and happy life. But in fact, she'd missed him so much she nearly went crazy.

When she went on a business trip up north, she went to that small northern city once more. She found the school Mister Ostrich once studied at and the teacher there told her that Mister Ostrich had officially withdrawn from the school. He and the school no longer had any relations.

Miss Crab once again went to the rental house that Mister Ostrich once lived in. Of course, she didn't find anything. New residents had already moved into the house, children's clothing hanging out to dry in front of the window. Miss Crab felt that Mister Ostrich was likely no longer in this city anymore, but she didn't have a clue about where he could be.

She spent the night in this city. The winter there was very cold. Miss Crab didn't know how Mister Ostrich lived through those few years. Did his feet get frostbitten? Was putting on and taking off his clothes very inconvenient?

Mama Ostrich had already passed away, but the stubborn Mister Ostrich never went to find Papa Ostrich, not even once. Miss Crab thought about him being on his own. When it was raining, there would be no one to hold an umbrella for him. When he was eating, there was no one to help serve him... Miss Crab refused to think about whether Mister Ostrich had a new lady by



his side. She was still here waiting, so how could he fall in love with someone else?

Dearest Mister Ostrich, Miss Crab finally saw the letter you stuffed into that picture frame. It's been seven years, so the paper's already gone yellow.

Mister Ostrich, did you know, seven years ago, when you were waiting in the park, Mister Peacock invited Miss Crab out to play ping pong. Miss Crab and Mister Peacock were at the side of the ping pong stage, enthusiastically discussing how to fill out their college selections.

Miss Crab wasn't at all interested in where Mister Peacock was planning on going to school. She just happily said that she wanted to give Mister Ostrich a surprise, to go to the same college as him!

Mister Peacock asked, "Crab, do you like Mister Ostrich?"

Miss Crab nodded, "Mm."

Yes, she liked Mister Ostrich. Not that kind of like, it was a different kind of liking.

Miss Crab remembered something that Mister Ostrich told her once. He said that there are some things that pass when they've passed. And there are some people who would only accompany you for a certain period in your life.

Mister Ostrich must have thought that he was just another one of those passing people in her life, no different from the coming and going of her classmates.

But that's not right.

He was the most shining figure in her life, the most tender touch and companion she'd ever had.

Miss Crab could talk on for three days and nights, and she still wouldn't be able to list all the good things there were about Mister Ostrich. Perhaps in others' eyes, Mister Ostrich wasn't a perfect person, but in Miss Crab's eyes, he was the best person.

Miss Crab never had the chance to tell Mister Ostrich that she knew things must have been difficult for him all these years. But their lives were both still



very, very long... Miss Crab really hoped that Mister Ostrich could be the person who was beside her for the rest of her life.

In these years, they'd lost each other in the sea of people. Thank God for giving them the chance to meet again.

This isn't a story without an ending, it's one with a sweet ending. A cheesy, cliché, happy ending. There's never been another ending. From the moment that Miss Crab and Mister Ostrich met, it was decided that they would be together.

– Miss Crab, Christmas 2010

The last image was still not the prettiest to look at, but you could also still tell the author had made an effort. The ostrich had closed his gentle eyes, and the red crab was on his back, two claws gently hugging his neck.

A pair of footsteps sounded behind him. Someone was walking slowly towards him.

Gu Mingxi's whole body stiffened. He didn't turn around or stand up. That person had already walked up to him. He could feel her breath, just like in a dream. He slowly closed his eyes. The sun was shining strongly, so even when he closed his eyes, it was still bright. The whole time, he was holding his breath. But when her fingers touched his back, he suddenly relaxed.

He let out a deep breath and opened his eyes. He lowered his head and saw a pair of tender hands move slowly from his shoulders to his chest, until finally, her arms wrapped around him.

"Gu Mingxi," her voice rang in his ears. "Are you satisfied with the ending I drew?"

[End of Part 3]

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 91

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 91 Ends of the Earth

*Gu Mingxi, have you gone mad? Why are you crying and laughing at the same time?*

---

A tear fell onto her arm.

Gu Mingxi recalled the words he told Dou Dou earlier that morning. “You’re a boy, you can’t love crying so much.” But now, his own eyes were all red. If Dou Dou saw him, he’d definitely make fun of him.

Thinking of this, he couldn’t help laughing. Pang Qian put her face next to his. She said, “Gu Mingxi, have you gone mad? Why are you crying and laughing at the same time?”

Her kiss landed on his eyes. After helping him get rid of his tears, she loosened her embrace and sat down beside him. She turned to look at him.

His head was bowed deeply, his eyes drooping. His body shook a bit. Pang Qian stroked his face and called to him, “Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi...”

She held his face in her hand, her thumb wiping away the tears. Finally, her own voice started choking up. “You’re the worst. I already decided that I wasn’t going to cry. And in the end, you actually cried, even though you’re a grown man. Does that make sense?”

Pang Qian’s tears spilled out from her eyes. Gu Mingxi finally lifted his head to look at her. Both of their eyes were red, their faces covered in tears. But in front of each others’ eyes was the face that was engraved deeply into their minds.

“Gu Mingxi, let me take a good look at you.” Her finger gently stroked his face, from his eyebrows to his eyes, and then his nose, lips, chin... He was no longer that fair and pretty youth. But he also didn’t look as dark, thin, or sloppy as he



had six years ago. Gu Mingxi had grown into a grown up man now. His complexion was a bit darker and well built. There were distinctive contours on his face. A straight nose, thin lips, a firm and sharp chin. He'd lost the softness and innocence of youth.

But the eyes he used to look at her were still the same as all those years ago. Gentle, pure, as vast as the sea.

Pang Qian smiled through her tears. "Gu Mingxi, it's really you! How can you be like this, hiding in such a faraway place? Do you know how hard it's been searching for you?"

He hadn't spoken yet. At this moment, he opened his mouth and gently called to her, "Pang Pang."

"Ey!" Pang Qian's tears started falling again. Gu Mingxi felt it was just incredible. He called her once again, "Pang Pang."

"Ey! It's me!"

"Pang Pang, Pang Pang..."

"It's me, it's me!"

"Pang Pang."

He suddenly straightened up, his chest out, sitting stiffly next to Pang Qian. His shoulders had grown more broad and his chest more thick. He tried his best to embrace her with what was left of his shoulders. She was surrounded by his scent, the very same one in her memories. Pang Qian broke out in tears and immediately held onto him, hugging him tightly in her arms. She called out loudly, "Gu Mingxi! Gu Mingxi! It's me! It's me! I'm warning you, this is the last time! If you dare to leave without a sound again, I'm going to post all your private information onto the internet! Your photo too! I'm going to let all your female fans see what an asshole their beloved Mister Ostrich really is!"

Gu Mingxi couldn't help it and suddenly let out a laugh. He straightened up again, staring at the girl in front of him.

She was very pretty now.

He felt very surprised. It was clearly her face and her facial features, but right



now, Pang Qian looked so elegant and beautiful. She had a head of shoulder-length reddish-brown hair, and she wasn't wearing any makeup. She had on a floral dress, and he could see her elegant shoulders and her delicate collarbone. Her skin was white and pale, her expression still as fresh and lively as before.

Pang Qian crinkled her nose and made a face at him. She said, "What, scared now? Gu Mingxi, I'm telling you, I'm a person who keeps my word. If you play around and go missing again, I'm going to mobilize the entire nation to find you!"

After she finished, she pulled out a napkin and wiped away her own tears along with Gu Mingxi's. Speaking to herself, she said, "Good thing I had foresight. I knew I would cry when I saw you, so I didn't put on any makeup. If I had, you'd be laughing so much at me right now."

Gu Mingxi lips sprang up and he smiled particularly happily.

This was really his Pang Pang. The one always by his side, who loved to make trouble, the girl who loved crying. She'd grown up, but she hadn't changed.

Pang Qian finally calmed herself. She was a bit thirsty when she spotted the iced coffee on the table. She grabbed it and took a sip. Gu Mingxi said, "I already drank from it."

Pang Qian gulped down half the cup and put it back on the table. She bent over, closed her eyes, and kissed him on the lips.

He immediately tasted the thick scent of coffee from her mouth. Cold and sweet. As she pecked his lips, she said, "I drank some too. Do you mind?"

Their foreheads touched, and he smiled and shook his head.

Pang Qian looked at him playfully and stuck out her tongue. "Then that's fine."

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In order to give them ample time to get reacquainted, Jiang Qi stayed away from the terrace for half an hour. Seeing Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sitting side by side, smiling happily, Jiang Qi also felt very happy. She sat across from them. "This is the most beautiful Christmas I've ever had. After I read Xiao Gu's story for the first time, I cried for half a day. I kept thinking, how could Miss Crab bear to live this kid? Now, the stone weighing my heart down has finally been



released. Seeing you two reunite because of the book I put out makes me really happy. Working as Xiao Gu's editor for four years, watching him all by himself, I really wanted to see him get his happy ending."

The three of them had lunch together. Jiang Qi and Gu Mingxi also discussed work. It was nearly the new year. Jiang Qi told Gu Mingxi that with the new year, the company hoped that Gu Mingxi would be able to put out two books. One in the summer, and another at the end of the year.

"I know that you have a heavy workload, but Xiao Gu, considering how popular "Crab" is right now, we really should strike while the iron's hot. I know that there are a lot of companies trying to sign your next book now, and their royalties might be higher. But the Team Leader said that if your new book is published with us, your royalties will definitely go up, and you'll definitely be satisfied. The Team Leader means for you to be at ease. Since we've worked together for so many years now, from when you were unknown to all your fame now, I hope that I'll be able to keep working with you. And you know the attitude of our publishing house. Our production and promotion are both industry-leading. So, Xiao Gu, I hope that as you develop ideas for your new book, you'll be able to continue discussing them with me."

Pang Qian was having pasta as she listened from the side. She asked, "Gu Mingxi, how much do you get in royalties for a book?"

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her, his expression a bit shy. He said, "Not much."

Jiang Qi covered her mouth and laughed. "This, it's an industry secret. We signed a confidentiality agreement with Xiao Gu, so he can't leak that information."

"So mysterious?" Pang Qian was surprised. "Even family can't know?"

Jiang Qi said, "That's not entirely the case. If a wife and husband discuss things in their own private time, you and I both know, there's naturally nothing we can do."

Gu Mingxi's face reddened and he lowered his head. His foot grabbed onto his fork and twisted up his pasta. Pang Qian glanced over at him and said quietly, "He and I... rarely have secrets."



After lunch, the sun was shining down strongly. The boss put up an umbrella for shade. Pang Qian went inside to look at the magazines, leaving Gu Mingxi and Jiang Qi to chat on the terrace. The air conditioning was on inside the cafe. She sat by the window, the warm sun shining on her making her sleepy. Not long after, she fell asleep on the sofa.

Sleeping for some time, she suddenly felt a gentle touch on her ankle. Pang Qian opened her eyes and saw Gu Mingxi sitting beside her, reaching over to her ankle with his foot.

“You’re done?” Pang Qian sat up and looked over to the terrace. Jiang Qi was already gone. She asked, “Where’s Qi?”

“She went to the airport.” Gu Mingxi smiled slightly.

“How long did I sleep for?”

“Not long, about an hour.” He looked at her and said, “Pang Pang, let’s go.”

“Go where?”

“To the school where I work.” As he spoke, he gently caressed her smooth leg with his foot. Pang Qian looked down at the chain around his right ankle. It was the small stone she’d gifted him.

Such a (monetarily) worthless chain, and he actually wore it for so many years.

He said, “Did Qi tell you that I’m working as a teacher now?”

Pang Qian nodded. “She mentioned it to me. You live at the school?”

“Yeah, the school dorms.” Gu Mingxi stood up and looked at Pang Qian’s luggage. He said, “Pang Pang, let’s go. I’ll take you to see the school. It’s Christmas today, and a few of the teachers agreed to have a party tonight.”

Pang Qian dragged her luggage along. Gu Mingxi said they ought to take a taxi, and Pang Qian asked, “How did you get here?”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “I took the bus.”

“Then we can just take the bus back.” Pang Qian wore a large straw hat and looked around excitedly. “It’s been a long time since I’ve taken the bus with you. We’re not in a rush anyway. No need to take a taxi.”



Gu Mingxi had no other option, so he and the two of them took the bus back. Luckily, the bus wasn't crowded. They still sat at the very back.

Hainan's sky was ridiculously blue, and the air was especially nice. Pang Qian sat by the window and watched the beautiful Sanya scenery passing by. She felt very relaxed and pleasant. It was the week of Christmas, and though it wasn't cold at all, many shops still hung up Christmas decorations. Having come from the cold E City, Pang Qian felt like she was dreaming here, with the warm winter outside and the warm Gu Mingxi beside her.

The bus swayed and started up as Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi started chatting. She asked, "When did you come to Sanya?"

Gu Mingxi answered, "Three years ago, at the end of '07."

"Why did you decide to come here?"

"Because it's very warm here. I don't have to wear thick clothes all year long." He lifted his foot for her to see. "Look, I can wear sandals in December. It's much more convenient for me."

Pang Qian looked at his feet and then curled her lips. Actually, she'd noticed it earlier when they were eating. His feet weren't the way she remembered them.

His feet were very big. Pang Qian remembered that, even though he used his feet for many things, like eating, writing, putting on his clothes, and picking things up, his feet were always clean and white. He would keep his toenails short. If his feet got dirty, he would wash them at the first opportunity he got.

But now, his feet were dark, rough, and even covered with scars.

Pang Qian couldn't imagine how he got those scars. She looked at bone protruding out beside his big toe, the obvious veins on the back of his foot, the cracks and calluses, and she felt such heartache.

The only thing that hadn't changed was probably his toenails. They were still cut short and neat, rectangular with a small half sun. Pang Qian recalled that her dad had said that it meant that Gu Mingxi was very healthy.

Pang Qian lowered her head onto Gu Mingxi's shoulder and wrapped her arms around his waist. She asked, "Gu Mingxi, when did Auntie pass away?"



Gu Mingxi looked down and said, “2006, in May.”

“Where did you go after that?”

“S City.”

“Did you ever return to E City?”

He turned to look at her and nodded. “After my mom passed away, I went back to E City once to take care of some formalities.”

“By yourself?”

“I went by myself, but Shark helped me take care of some things.”

“Why didn’t you look for me to help you?”

“Pang Pang...” He didn’t really know how to explain. Pang Qian would never know how far he’d fallen at that time. After Li Han passed away, he sold the house and returned all the money and favors he owed. He was neatly penniless and homeless at that point.

He was completely unable to take care of himself. But even then, he didn’t go to Gu Guoxiang for help.

Shark and Xu Shuanghua lent Gu Mingxi two pairs of helping hands. After careful consideration, Gu Mingxi decided to accept Xu Shuanghua’s help. He followed Xu Shuanghua to S City and moved into his house.

Xu Shuanghua was a very busy person. Aside from when there was class, he was flying all across the country. Gu Mingxi mostly stayed at home by himself.

When Xu Shuanghua returned, he’d teach Gu Mingxi about drawing. Sometimes, he would let him go to S City’s Art Institute to listen in on a lecture.

The teachers and students at the school quickly took notice of this special boy. He carried his backpack and walked around the campus. He knew the curriculum for all the school disciplines. Often, he would silently enter a room before a class started and sit in the corner to observe.

All the teachers knew his relation to Xu Shuanghua, so they never made him leave. Gu Mingxi didn’t disturb others either. During sketching classes, he didn’t draw, but instead listened, watched, and thought. When he returned home, he



would practice drawing.

Most of the time, Gu Mingxi was very calm. But occasionally, he would become a bit fidgety. Whenever that happened, he would head over to the talent market at the bridge in S City and have a chat with Cannon.

Cannon was a good guy. When they were together, Gu Mingxi felt completely at ease. Cannon taught Gu Mingxi how to make the small straw figures. Frogs, crabs, butterflies, grasshoppers, rabbits... He worked very slowly and clumsily with his feet, and sometimes he just leaned against the bridge railing and daydreamed.

The winters in S City were just as intolerably cold as those in Z City. The temperatures outside were extremely low and the people on the road would rush by in their thick coats. Gu Mingxi wore a lot of clothes. Bundled up like a big cotton ball, he sat on the bridge as the winter wind blew through his hair. Then he looked up silently at the dark gray sky.

One time, someone passed by him and then walked back, leaving five dollars on the floor in front of him before walking away.

Gu Mingxi stared at that five dollars and Cannon laughed crazily beside him. After he finished laughing, he asked Gu Mingxi, “Xiao Gu, do you have any difficulties right now?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head, “No, I’m doing well.”

Cannon pulled out 500 dollars from his pocket. Ignoring Gu Mingxi’s protests, he stuffed it into Gu Mingxi’s pocket. “Go buy something good to eat. You’re too thin.”

At the time, Gu Mingxi was still drawing for other artists, one book after another, working hard to earn money. In early 2007, Xu Shuanghua gave Gu Mingxi Jiang Qi’s business card and told him that there was a publishing company that was very interested in his works.

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At the end of 2007, Gu Mingxi decided move down south. Before leaving, he went to the bridge to see Cannon. But even after several days, Cannon didn’t show up.



The woman who sold lighters to the side of him told Gu Mingxi that Cannon's kid had gotten sick, so they went away for treatment.

From then on, Gu Mingxi never met Cannon again.

When the bus arrived at their stop, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got off together. They were in a place pretty far away from the city. The streets were lined with tropical trees, but Pang Qian didn't know if they were palm trees or coconut trees. She just dragged her luggage along behind Gu Mingxi, asking one question after another.

"Gu Mingxi, what class do you teach at school?"

"Guess." Gu Mingxi turned to her and smiled.

She thought for a moment. "Art?"

"That's right. But not just that."

"What else?"

"Math and English." Gu Mingxi said, "There aren't many teachers here, so each one teaches several classes."

"And you still have time to draw?"

"My schedule is really tight, but you make time. On the weekends, during summer and winter breaks, in the evenings. I can draw at those times." He shrugged. "I don't really have any other recreational activities."

Pang Qian asked, "Living in the dorms, is there anything that's inconvenient for you?"

"Naturally," Gu Mingxi said. "No matter how amazing my feet are, they still won't be as good as hands."

He spoke very clearly, but Pang Qian felt terrible about it. She pulled off her straw hat and put it on his head. Then she said angrily, "Who told you to hide yourself away somewhere? Who told you not to look for me?! When you were in E City, where you ever alone? I-I definitely would have helped you."

Her hat was sky blue, with trimmed edges and a pink bow. Gu Mingxi shook his head, but not only didn't the hat fall off, it fit his head even more. Helplessly, he



said, “Pang Pang...”

Pang Qian laughed nonstop. Gu Mingxi had her help him take the hat off, but she didn’t want to. Gu Mingxi blocked her path and grabbed at her skirt. Pang Qian laughed happily and jumped away.

They’d already walked onto the school grounds. The two of them were playing around when a voice sounded from the side, “Teacher Xiao Gu’s back? Ah? Who’s the pretty lady?”

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi turned their heads and saw five people, three young men and a young woman. There were also six or seven little boys.

Gu Mingxi was still wearing the straw hat with a pink bow, and his face turned red with embarrassment. He shouted at Pang Qian again, “Pang Pang, hurry and take the hat off!”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 92

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 92 Teacher Xiao Gu

*Gu Mingxi has nothing. Gu Mingxi is a pauper.*

---

Teacher Xiao Gu who'd left by himself that morning actually came back with a young, pretty woman!

The young teachers of the primary school were all shocked. They were about to head to the market to buy ingredients for their dinner party that night, but after seeing Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, they immediately started to greet the two with great enthusiasm.

Pang Qian had already helped Gu Mingxi take off the straw hat, and she gave a friendly smile to the teachers. Ji Xiu'er was holding Dou Dou's hand as they stood on the side. The two of them both looked at Pang Qian with a complicated expression.

Teacher Chen smiled and asked Gu Mingxi, "Teacher Gu, give us an introduction. Who is this?"

Pang Qian's eyes turned and stared at Gu Mingxi. He said, "This is an old friend, (Ms.) Pang."

–Pang?

The young teachers suddenly started bubbling, "Teacher Gu! Is this your Miss Crab?"

Gu Mingxi laughed lightly and nodded his head. "Yeah, this is her."

"Oh! Teacher Gu, congratulations!" Some of the teachers were excited to death. Teacher Wang and Teacher Song also gave a sympathetic glance over to Ji Xiu'er.



Gu Mingxi introduced Pang Qian to Teachers Chen, Wang, Song, Ji Xiu'er, and Dou Dou. Ji Xiu'er seemed to be forcing her smile a bit. After she said "Hello," her eyes immediately staggered away.

Pang Qian realized that the child named Dou Dou had been staring at her the entire time with a rather hostile expression. Pang Qian made a silly face at him, and the kid's face immediately flushed red before he hid behind Ji Xiu'er.

The other teachers waited at the school gates as Gu Mingxi took Pang Qian and her luggage back to his dorm. Pang Qian took a quick glance around. It was small but very clean. She laughed as she walked back outside with him.

Everyone took the bus to the big market three stops away. Pang Qian kept walking right beside Gu Mingxi. Dou Dou walked ahead of them but constantly turned back to look at them. He pulled on Ji Xiu'er's hand and asked, "Teacher Ji, can I go to Teacher Gu?"

"No," Ji Xiu'er said. "Teacher Gu has a friend visiting now. He has to take care of her, how can he have time to deal with you right now?"

Dou Dou lowered his head dejectedly. He thought about how when Teacher Gu went to the market in the past, he was always the one who walked with him.

The teachers walked around the market in twos and threes, and they bought a lot of stuff. Pang Qian didn't know much about cooking, but she had a lot of opinions. She told Gu Mingxi that she wanted to eat this and that. He smiled the whole time and said, "Buy whatever you want to eat. The money's in my pocket, you can get it yourself."

In recent years, Pang Qian had a decent income, so she rarely felt like she was missing out when it came to food. Usually, she would just eat whatever she wanted to eat. When she went to restaurants, she didn't really look at the prices either. As they walked around in the seafood area, a giant crab caught her eye.

If you go to Sanya, you obviously have to eat seafood. Pang Qian pulled on Gu Mingxi's shirt sleeve. "Gu Mingxi, I want to eat giant crab."

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "Then pick one out."

Without even asking about the price, she crouched down and picked out seven fat crabs. The boss said, "1.8 kg, 380 dollars."



Pang Qian didn't have any money on her, so she very naturally reached into Gu Mingxi's pants pocket. After paying, she realized that Dou Dou was standing right next to her, watching her with a very unsatisfied look.

"Teacher Gu, giant crabs are very expensive," Dou Dou said to Gu Mingxi. "Let's not eat giant crab."

The boss had already accepted the payment, so Pang Qian was a bit embarrassed. Gu Mingxi bent over slightly and said, "Dou Dou, it's Christmas today and it's the first time my friend is visiting. Let's celebrate a little. I'll treat everyone to giant crab."

"But giant crab is really expensive. We never eat it." Dou Dou thought of his everyday life with Gu Mingxi, and he felt wronged. Gu Mingxi was very frugal. Although every meal included a meat or fish dish, he'd never bought such expensive seafood before.

Pang Qian carried the bag of crabs with a bit of helplessness. Gu Mingxi gently told her, "Don't mind him. It's true that Dou Dou and I don't usually eat crab. It's not that we can't, but it's not that convenient for me. Really."

Pang Qian looked at him and blinked a few times. She knew he wasn't telling the truth.

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As they kept walking around the market, Pang Qian took note of what Gu Mingxi was wearing. He had on a white cotton shirt with wide, casual army-green pants that were a bit faded.

Pang Qian suddenly realized that Gu Mingxi must not be that well off, economically speaking. Although he was a teacher and published a few books, he didn't have any support from his family. Pang Qian knew that she'd figured something out (?). Ever since they were kids, Gu Mingxi always had more spending money than her. But now, she'd realized, he wasn't the same youth who didn't have to worry about food and clothing expenses.

Pang Qian started feeling a bit of regret at greedily buying such expensive crab. 380 dollars. She wondered how long that money would have lasted toward his living expenses. Pang Qian wanted to pay him back after they returned to the school, but she also felt that he wouldn't accept it.



She didn't ask him to buy anything else, but Gu Mingxi wouldn't have it. He took Pang Qian to the fruit area and had her pick out some fruit.

"If you come to Sanya, you have to eat the fruit here. It's really good." He pointed at some mangoes with his chin. "Buy a few mangoes, they're very sweet. And some mangosteen and dragon fruit. You like them."

Pang Qian shook her head. "No, it's okay. I don't want to eat it."

Gu Mingxi said, "Then buy some coconut. There are fresh coconut here. They're a bit heavy though, so after you buy them, get Teacher Chen to carry it."

Pang Qian shook her head again. "I don't want to eat it, really. Not at all."

Gu Mingxi didn't say anything. He glanced at Pang Qian and then directly spoke to the owner. "Boss, help me pick out a few mangoes, good ones."

Pang Qian went to pull at his sleeve. "Gu Mingxi..."

"I'm eating it," he told her lightly. "Pang Pang, help my pay for it. If it's too heavy, just get Teacher Chen or Teacher Wang to help carry it."

Then Pang Qian could only pay and accept the bag of mangoes.

When they were finished buying everything, everyone headed back to the bus to go back to the school. Ji Xiu'er considerately brought Dou Dou back to her dorm.

At the east-most door of the teacher's dorms, Gu Mingxi lifted his foot to open the door. He turned back to Pang Qian and smiled, "Come in."

Pang Qian carried the things they bought inside to the kitchen. She walked out and saw that Gu Mingxi had already closed the door and the room was quiet.

He'd headed straight to the bathroom to wash his feet, without another glance at her. Gu Mingxi sat down on a plastic chair and turned on the faucet. Cold water poured out as he rubbed his feet against each other. His sleeves hung at his side, swinging with his body. After he washed his feet, he walked back to the living room. Gu Mingxi took a look around and muttered to himself, "Seems like there's no hot water. I'll go boil some."

Before he even moved, someone came up behind him and embraced him.



Gu Mingxi had to admit, he wasn't used to it. But he felt very happy about it all the same.

"Gu Mingxi, tell me, what does it mean to be an old friend?" Pang Qian had kept thinking about the way he'd introduced her. She asked unhappily, "Why didn't you say old classmate?"

Gu Mingxi smiled, "I was originally going to say neighbor."

"You're the worst!" She held onto him and suddenly started to tickle him. Gu Mingxi twisted himself but couldn't avoid her. Unable to hold in his laughter, he laughed heartily as he called out, "Pang Pang! Stop it!"

Pang Qian said, "So, tell me, what am I to you?"

He laughed loudly and pulled away. "You're my Pang Pang."

"Title? Name? Position?"

Gu Mingxi tried really hard to dodge her and said in a low tone, "Okay, you're my girlfriend. That's good enough, right? Hurry and let go, it's so itchy!"

"What do you mean, 'that's good enough'?!" Pang Qian was extremely dissatisfied. Despite wearing a dress, she sprawled across his back and hooked her legs around him. She pulled at his ear and he couldn't help bending over from the weight of her entire body. It wasn't easy for him, but he was also happy to suffer in that moment.

"Pang Pang, how can you still act like a kid." His voice carried some helplessness as he stood there, bent over, not daring to move. Pang Qian clung tightly to him, her hands clenching onto his shirt. With her cheek against his neck, she said, "Gu Mingxi, I really missed you. Really, really missed you a lot. Let me hold you for awhile. I'm worried it's just a dream, and when I wake up, I'll just be holding onto a pillow."

Actually, it was the same for him. He'd seen her countless times in his dreams. He stood in that park, a large tree looming over him. His girl stood in front of him, an arm's length away, but he couldn't touch her.

He really wanted to let her hold onto him, but it was raining heavily and the sound of the rain drowned out his own voice. Pang Qian smiled at him and



turned around, her figure turning to bubbles and floating away with the wind and the rain.

Right now, Gu Mingxi was willing to keep standing like that, with his girl on his back. Just like in his illustrations, a small ostrich carrying a little crab on his back. No matter how long the distance, how tough or tiring, he wouldn't put her down.

But how could Pang Qian bear to tire him out. After acting like an octopus for a bit, she decided to get off of him. She looked around his small place curiously and asked, "Gu Mingxi, have you been living here for the past three years?"

Gu Mingxi straightened up and nodded. "Yeah, ever since the Spring Festival in 2008, I've been teaching here."

His place was very small with two rooms. In the outside room, there was a dining table and chairs, a refrigerator, cabinet, and a large desk. The desk was low to the ground, with papers, paints, brushes, a palette, and professional books piled on top. It was very clearly Gu Mingxi's illustration and work area.

The inner room had two single beds, a large dresser, and a TV hanging on the wall. There was also a normal sized desk, and a laptop on one of the beds.

The room was a bit cramped, but things were tidy and neat inside. Pang Qian look a look around and her eyes landed on a children's bike.

"Is that Dou Dou's?" Pang Qian pointed at the bike as she asked Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi turned to look and nodded, "Mm."

Pang Qian had already heard that Dou Dou was a child who lived with him, but she didn't understand why. She asked, "Why does Dou Dou live with you?"

"Because he has nowhere else to go. Whether there's one person eating here or two, they still have to eat. So I brought him here." Gu Mingxi walked over to the refrigerator and opened it with his chin and shoulder. He asked Pang Qian, "There's no water here, but there are cold drinks. Do you want to drink something?"

Pang Qian walked over to look. Orange juice, cola, lemon tea... She couldn't believe it. "Gu Mingxi, didn't you used to dislike these things?"



Gu Mingxi laughed. “I don’t drink them, they’re Dou Dou’s. He likes to drink them but I don’t let him drink too much. I only let him have one bottle a week.”

Pang Qian pulled out a bottle of cola and went to sit down at the dining table with Gu Mingxi. Sitting next to him, she asked, “What happened? Where are Dou Dou’s parents?”

Gu Mingxi gave her a smile before saying, “Dou Dou’s parents got divorced. His mom was from Guangdong, so she went back there. His dad... He has some mental issues and he likes to drink (alcohol) a lot. When he drinks, he abuses Dou Dou.” He spoke slowly. “Two years ago, when I started teaching, I realized there was always a dirty child listening in from just outside the classroom. Every time I walked out the door, he would run away. Then one day, after class, I found that he didn’t run away. He stood outside the classroom, peering in at the girls who were eating snacks inside. He was practically drooling, and then I knew, he was hungry.”

Pang Qian smiled as she said, “You must have given him something tasty to eat.”

“Mm, I brought him back to the dorms and gave him some fruit. Then I found that he had wounds all over his body.” Gu Mingxi took a deep breath. “On his legs and his back, there were large bruises and even burn scars. Dou Dou’s middle finger on his left hand was broken by his dad, and since he didn’t go to the doctor, he can’t straighten it out anymore. At the time, I reported it to the police, but they told me that whether it was a father beating his son or someone with a mental illness, they couldn’t do anything about it.”

Pang Qian asked, “And then what? Just like that, you took him in?”

“No,” Gu Mingxi shook his head. “I brought him back because he was nearly beaten to death by his dad.” He lifted his foot and pointed at the cola bottle in Pang Qian’s hand. “His dad hit him with a glass beer bottle. The wound on his head was really big, and he was covered in blood. It was their neighbor who found Dou Dou and sent him to the hospital. I only found out when they reported it on the news. When I went to the hospital to see Dou Dou, they said his father had already been sent to a psychiatric hospital. Dou Dou’s (maternal) grandmother kept crying there. She was old and her sight was bad. She wasn’t



really able to take care of Dou Dou. No one else in their family was willing to take him in either. The poor kid just laid there in the hospital bed. So I told his grandmother that he could live with me after he was discharged.”

Pang Qian was surprised. “You’ve been living with him for the past two years?”

“Yeah, we’re together everyday. He hasn’t gone back home since.” Gu Mingxi smiled and continued, “Dou Dou really understands things well, and he helps me with a lot of stuff. Instead of saying that I’m taking care of him, you might as well say that we take care of each other.”

Pang Qian said, “Gu Mingxi, why are you so grand and generous?! Then... Then what happens in the future? If you leave, what happens to Dou Dou?”

“I’m not grand, and I haven’t thought about the future. Pang Pang, everyone has their desperate moments, when they’re at the end of their road.” He turned to look at her in the eyes. “When my mom passed away, I’d also hit a dead end, but there was a teacher who took me in. He didn’t have any blood relations to me, but he let me stay in his house. Not only did he teach me to draw, he helped me find a job. It was only after staying with him for a year and a half and bettering my situation, that I ended up coming to Hainan. Dou Dou’s the same. He was five years old at the time, and he turned back from death’s door. If I hadn’t taken him back with me, I don’t even want to imagine what things would have been like after his dad was released. Really, his dad might have really beaten him to death.”

Pang Qian rested her head on his shoulder. “Why didn’t you come to find me back then? You could have stayed at my house. It’s not like feeding one more mouth would have been difficult for us.”

Gu Mingxi curled his lips and then smiled. “Let’s not talk about the things that have already passed. Right now, I’m doing well. Really.”

“Okay, we won’t talk about it. Then let’s talk about the future instead.” Pang Qian wrapped both arms around his waist and turned to look at him. “Gu Mingxi, it will be New Year’s soon. Come home with me for New Year’s this year.”

Gu Mingxi tilted his head and looked at her shining hair and long eyelashes. He asked, “Go home with you? As what?”



“My boyfriend,” Pang Pang said. “Gu Mingxi is Pang Qian’s boyfriend.”

“Pang Pang...” he hesitated. “You don’t think... that between us... that it would be better if we learned more about each other before we decided anything?”

Pang Qian lifted her chin from his shoulder and looked at him strangely. “Learn about each other? Me and you? Do we still need to learn about each other?”

He nodded. Thinking back to the marketplace, he smiled and asked her, “Did you end up going to graduate school?”

Pang Qian shook her head. “No. Ever since I graduated, I’ve been working.”

“What kind of work do you do?”

She answered honestly, “Investment banking. At first, I was in Shanghai. But after three years, I went back to E City. I’m working at a joint venture investment banking company now.”

“You must be doing really well then, with a lot of space for developments,” Gu Mingxi said. “But Pang Pang, I don’t have anything.”

Startled, Pang Qian said, “What are you supposed to have? A house? A car? Money? An honorable job?”

“That’s right.” His eyes looked very forgiving, and his tone was very even. “Gu Mingxi has nothing. Gu Mingxi is a pauper. Not only doesn’t he have a house, a car, money, or a good job, he also doesn’t have a diploma, or arms, or... a family. Can this Gu Mingxi really be Pang Qian’s boyfriend?”

Pang Qian’s eyes glistened. “Does Gu Mingxi like Pang Qian?”

He smiled, “He does.”

“As long as Gu Mingxi likes Pang Qian, then he can be her boyfriend.” Pang Qian stared at him, her hand reaching out to stroke his cheek. She said seriously, “Just because you don’t have something now doesn’t mean that you’ll never have it. We’re both still young. We’ll just work hard.”

There was a faint smile hidden in his expression. “Pang Pang, your mom has never really liked me much.”

“Your position in the family is determined by your economic contribution.



Right now, I'm the boss in my family!" Pang Qian proudly raised her chin. "Also, my dad supports me. When he found out that I'd found you, he was so happy. He kept telling me to bring you back home for New Year's."

When she finished, she embraced him again, her ear held against his heart. She said quietly, "Every New Year's, we always wonder where Gu Mingxi is having New Year's dinner. Is he alone or is there someone beside him? I want to spend every New Year's with you from now on. Gu Mingxi, promise me that you'll come home with me this New Year's."

That faraway city was his hometown. Gu Mingxi was silent for a long time, before he finally answered, "Okay."

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That evening, the young teachers held a Christmas party together. Gu Mingxi and Teacher Song were the main chefs, cooking in the community kitchen. Pang Qian walked to the kitchen and saw Teacher Song at the stove. Gu Mingxi was sitting on a chair with a short table in front of him. His feet were up on the table, cutting up a pile of vegetables. He held down the vegetables with his left foot and used his right to cut.

Pang Qian was simply shocked and alarmed. She said, "Gu Mingxi, let me help you. You might cut yourself."

Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look at her. He shook his head and smiled. "That's okay, I can take care of it. I think I'd worry more if you were cutting."

Teacher Song turned back to look at Pang Qian. "Miss Crab, you don't have to worry about Teacher Gu. He's the best cook among us. He can take care of it all. Buying, cleaning, cutting, cooking. And his food tastes so good. You're lucky that you'll be able to eat it in the future."

Pang Qian's face turned red. She asked Gu Mingxi quietly, "When did you learn to cook?"

Gu Mingxi's head was down as he concentrated on cutting. He said, "When my mom was sick. If I didn't learn, then I was going to starve. I thought it was kind of hard at first, but after awhile, it's become very familiar to me."

After he finished cutting the vegetables, Gu Mingxi used the knife and his left



foot to sweep the vegetables into a basket. Then he stood up, bent over to grab the basket under his chin, and brought it over to the counter by the stove.

He told Teacher Song, "I'll stir fry this."

As he was cooking, Pang Qian kept watching him from the side. She remembered the time she went over to his house in high school, and Gu Mingxi cooked the winter melon. Back then, he'd needed Pang Qian's help to add the seasoning, but now, he didn't need any help at all. From adding the oil to the pan, he cooked the food all on his own with his two feet.

After the oil heated up, Gu Mingxi put the vegetables into the pan. He turned and told Pang Qian to stand back a bit, and she obediently moved back. She popped her head out from behind him and watched as he picked up the vegetables and dropped them into the pan.

The sizzling oil sounded and jumped up. Pang Qian watched Gu Mingxi quickly pick up the spatula and start stir frying. He looked like he'd done it many times before. Standing behind him, she asked, "The oil splattered onto your feet. Isn't it hot?"

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "My skin's thick and I'm used to it, so it's okay."

After tossing the vegetables a bit, he put down the spatula, and used a spoon to sprinkle some salt. He stir fried a bit more and then added some MSG. Finally, he turned off the fire and told Pang Qian, "Pang Pang, help me plate this and bring it out."

From start to end, he stood very stably in front of the stove on one foot. The fire had glowed onto his dark face and Pang Qian could see the sweat all over his head. There were traces of sweat on the back of his shirt too.

She pulled out a napkin and helped him wipe it away. Gu Mingxi lowered his head and looked at her. She smiled and said, "I'll leave the cooking to you in the future."

Gu Mingxi bent over slightly and said, "So you'll eat whatever I cook?"

"Of course, I'm not a picky eater."

Gu Mingxi bumped her cheek with his own. "It's agreed then. Whatever I cook



in the future, you'll have to eat it all. Pang Pang, you're too thin. I'm going to fatten you up."

"Hateful! You're covered in sweat." She said that, but she wrapped her arms around his neck. "I'm losing weight. All the female employees at work are thinner than me."

"I like when you're plump."

"Hm. And I liked when you were paler. When you get pale again, you can come bargain with me!"

As she spoke, she deftly plated the food and slipped out of the kitchen, leaving behind a blank Gu Mingxi.

He lowered his head and looked at his feet. He knew that his skin had gotten a lot darker. Gu Mingxi suddenly recalled the male characters Pang Qian used to have him copy from her girly comics and the celebrities that she'd liked growing up. They all seemed to have been refined, good looking, Adonis types.

And of course, he couldn't help thinking of Xie Yi.

Gu Mingxi felt a bit gloomy inside.

At the dining table, Ji Xiu'er and Dou Dou had been sitting together. When they looked at Pang Qian, neither of their expressions was at all friendly. Dou Dou quietly spoke to Ji Xiu'er, "Teacher Ji, I think that you're prettier than that lady."

Ji Xiu'er looked over to him, "Thanks."

Pang Qian sat down next to Dou Dou and wanted to chat with him. Dou Dou pursed his lips, glanced at her, and ran off to the kitchen.

He pulled on Gu Mingxi's shirt hem. "Teacher Gu, Teacher Gu."

Gu Mingxi had just finished cooking something. He put down the spatula in his right foot and turned off the fire. He lowered his head to look at Dou Dou, "What is it?"

"How are we going to sleep tonight?" Dou Dou was looking at Pang Qian's luggage, and then he looked innocently at Gu Mingxi, "Will Auntie Crab sleep in my bed? Where will I sleep then?"



Gu Mingxi thought about it, and then lifted his foot to nudge his leg. He said, “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of it.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 93

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 93 Tranquil Sea

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At dinner, the other teachers each took chatting with Pang Qian. After she finished eating and had a bit of beer, she started talking more. And then, she started sharing the embarrassing moments from when Gu Mingxi was in school.

“How old was he then? Let me think for a minute. Should have been about 8 years old, at most 9. We went to a park that had a pond, and the pond had carp in it. We bought some bread nearby and crumbled it to feed to the fish. Gu Mingxi played with us too. He took off his shoes and sat down on the edge of the pond. In the end, because there were so many of us, one of his shoes was accidentally tossed into the pond. No matter how much we tried, we couldn’t fish it back up. Hahahaha...”

Pang Qian’s face was flushed as she sat there laughing. She was leaning on Gu Mingxi’s shoulder, and he had an unpleasant expression on his face. Teacher Chen asked, “And then what?”

“And then he just kept playing with one bare foot. I remember that he even cut his foot on some rocks, right?” Pang Qian pouted and then kept on laughing. In front of all these people, she suddenly said, “Gu Mingxi, I apologize to you. To tell you the truth, I was the one who accidentally dropped your shoe into the pond. I was too scared to tell you back then. I’m really sorry.”

All the teachers burst out in laughter. Gu Mingxi nearly cried from all the laughing. He remembered that incident as well. After his shoe went into the water, Pang Qian had been extremely anxious. She’d sprawled down on ground by the pond with a stick in her hand, trying to fish back the shoe. At the



time, he'd been especially touched.

Gu Mingxi clenched his teeth and looked at Pang Qian. "Pang Pang, come on then. Now you can tell me about all the unlucky things you did in the past that I don't know about."

And Pang Qian actually had a bit to say. "I drank your milk during the class breaks. Did you know? It's because you didn't look like you were going to drink it, and I was afraid it would go to waste. And then there was one time when we were fighting. I covered your shoes in chalk dust, but you said that it was probably one of the boys who did it. I wanted to tell the teacher about it, but you said forget it. I felt really embarrassed then. Then another time, you said that I lost several volumes of your comics and I said I didn't remember it. Actually, I knew that I had them, but I didn't know where I'd put them. My mom might have put it away somewhere, or maybe I just left it somewhere when I was carrying it around. In any case, I knew you wouldn't get angry with me so I just pretended I didn't know. Oh, there's something else you should know. When we were deskmates, I would copy your homework when you weren't paying attention. And when we were taking a test... I'd cheated off you before. It was mostly in primary school, and then a bit in junior high, and a bit more in high school... Hahaha..."

She leaned against Gu Mingxi's shoulder, rambling on. The teachers had all quieted down and Gu Mingxi's expression was calm, as if he'd returned to that carefree time of the past.

The troubles in his past didn't seem worth mentioning now: It was hard to use scissors, so he was bad at crafts. When it was gym class, he could only run laps by himself, looking on with envy at the other boys playing basketball. No matter how well he could draw, he couldn't go up to blackboard. He'd never been the class head or class representative. And because he was exempt from sports activities, he was unable to receive an Excellent Student Award. (Note: The term is literally "good student in three things," referring to studies, athletics, and attitude.)

Gu Mingxi laughed, and then turned and kissed Pang Qian's head. He said, "Miss Pang, leave me some face, won't you?"



Pang Qian was joyous. She told everyone, "Then let me say something about how awesome you were. Hey, did you guys know that when Gu Mingxi was in high school, he was always ranked in the top five of the year after every exam? We were at a top high school too, with more than 400 students! Do you know how many points he got on his college entrance exam? 641 points! That's 130 points more than I got!"

All the teachers were stunned. Gu Mingxi had been teaching for three years and he had the lowest pay of everyone else, because he only had a high school diploma. Everyone knew that he'd dropped out of college, but they didn't know what his academic history was like before then.

Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, you drank too much. What's the point of talking about this stuff."

Pang Qian sobered up a bit as she laughed. She said, "I just remembered some things from the past."

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After they ate, everyone chatted for a bit before dispersing. Gu Mingxi had Pang Qian get her luggage, saying that he'd take her out to arrange for a place to stay.

"What for?" Pang Qian asked. "I can just stay here at your place."

Gu Mingxi said calmly, "There's not much space here, and Dou Dou stays here too. I'll find somewhere else for you to stay at."

Pang Qian stomped her feet. "I don't want to! Dou Dou's just a little kid. I can sleep on the floor, in the living room is fine. Why do you want me to stay somewhere else?!"

Gu Mingxi remained firm. "Let's go, don't dawdle there."

Pang Qian originally thought she would definitely be staying at Gu Mingxi's dorm. She was rather upset now. As she lifted up her luggage, she said, "You don't have to come out. I can find a guesthouse on my own."

Gu Mingxi crooked his head and looked at her. "What's wrong, are you angry?"



Pang Qian ignored him.

Gu Mingxi said, "I just wanted you to be more comfortable."

Pang Qian glared at him. "Is a guesthouse comfortable? I want to stay at your dorm!"

Gu Mingxi sighed. "I didn't say I was taking you to a guesthouse."

Pang Qian's eyes widened. "Ah?"

They took a taxi and passed through the streets of Sanya until they reached the Sanya Bay area. It stopped in front of the gates to a residential area.

Pang Qian took her luggage from the car and looked around curiously. This was a high class area. The houses glowed with a warm light in the nighttime. The scenery in the area was beautiful. There was even an outdoor swimming pool and some foreigners out for a swim.

The security was very strict there, but when the security officer at the gate saw Gu Mingxi, he smiled and opened the door. Pang Qian pulled her luggage in and followed Gu Mingxi into a high rise. They took the elevator to the 16th floor and got off. Gu Mingxi walked to one door and said, "The keys are in my pocket. Pang Pang, open the door."

Pang Qian hesitatingly took out the keys from his pocket and then opened the door. She turned on the living room light and could immediately see the small house. It was decorated very warmly, with warm colors and simple furniture. The sliding door to the balcony wasn't shut, so the night breeze blew in, causing the curtains to flutter.

Pang Qian left her luggage and curiously walked barefoot over to the sliding door. She looked out and saw the sea.

Against the night, the sea was tranquil and beautiful. The bright moon hung in the sky and the stars shimmered against the sky. The breeze blew in, causing Pang Qian's hair to fly about chaotically and her skirt to dance around. She covered her mouth in awe as Gu Mingxi walked up behind her. With his chest to her back, he lowered his head, closed his eyes, and kissed her smooth shoulder.



**“Do you like it?” he asked.**

**“...” Pang Qian turned around and grabbed his neck with both hands. She put her forehead against his and asked, “What’s going on here? Did you lie to me?”**

**He laughed lightly. “It’s true that I don’t have a car, that I don’t have a great job, that I don’t have a diploma, and that I don’t have arms. But... I have a small house and... A little, just a little, money.”**

**“Gu Mingxi!”**

**He didn’t give her the opportunity to pinch him or hit him, because he’d already started kissing her.**

**The scent of the sea filled the air, a bit salty and a bit tart.**

**But their kiss was sweet, a sentimental kiss. No more tears and no more hurt.**

**Gu Mingxi’s house was small. One bedroom, living room, kitchen, and a bathroom. Just 60 sqm. The house was like his dorm, very clean and tidy. But it felt much more like a house.**

**He brought Pang Qian to the bedroom. She saw two beds, one large and one small. The small one was only one meter wide, pushed against the wall. The sheets and pillows were covered in cartoons, and this was obviously Dou Dou’s bed. The large bed had blue sheets and blankets. At the head of the bed, there were a few books and a ‘help yourself’ back scratcher. It just shouted Gu Mingxi.**

**“When do you live here?” Pang Qian asked as she looked and poked around. Gu Mingxi said, “During winter and summer break, and also when there are long holidays. Sometimes I come back on the weekends too.”**

**“When did you buy the house?”**

**“At the end of 2007. I bought it when I got here.” Gu Mingxi glanced at her. “Shark came down to Sanya to invest in some property. He asked if I wanted to come, and when I came to take a look, I immediately liked it. Shark lent me some money and I had my own savings. The house is small so the price wasn’t**



that big. I payed half and mortgaged the other half. At the time, real estate was a lot cheaper than it is now.”

Pang Qian asked, “Is it still mortgaged now?”

Gu Mingxi nodded. “Mm, I haven’t repaid the bank yet, but I should be able to in about a year. I’ve already returned the money from Shark.”

Pang Qian was surprised. “You know how to earn money, huh!”

He didn’t say anything and just smiled.

Gu Mingxi pushed open the sliding closet door and sat down on the bed. He pulled out clean sheets and called Pang Qian, “I haven’t been here for two weeks. We should change the sheets, because there’s a lot of dust.”

Pang Qian picked up the blanket and giggled as she asked, “Are you staying here with me tonight?”

She spoke very directly and Gu Mingxi’s expression became a bit unnatural. “No, I have to go back. Dou Dou’s only 7 years old. How can I let him spend the night on his own?” He sat on the bed, pulling open the sheets with his legs. “Every time I come, Dou Dou helps me change it. Without him, it would waste a lot of time.”

Pang Qian pouted and then helped him change the bed sheets. Then Gu Mingxi went to the kitchen to boil a pot of water for her. The kettle was small so he could move it from the sink to the stove on one foot. He turned on the stove.

There was a tall chair in the kitchen, just a bit shorter than the counter. Pang Qian knew that it was easier for him to do things if he had a chair to sit in.

Actually, she hadn’t seen his unconventional way of working in a long time, but it didn’t feel at all unfamiliar. His particular image had already been deeply ingrained in her mind.

Pang Qian watched Gu Mingxi busying himself in the kitchen and was rather shocked. Present day Gu Mingxi was living so well on his own. Pang Qian suspected that even without Dou Dou, he’d been getting on just fine.



After the water started boiling, Gu Mingxi wanted to pour some out, but Pang Qian stopped him. "Let it cool down a bit. I want to drink cooled water."

Gu Mingxi knew her intent and smiled as he said, "I won't burn myself."

"I said I don't want to drink hot water." She spoke playfully as she wrapped her arms around his waist.

"Okay." Gu Mingxi looked around and then said, "The floor hasn't been mopped and the furniture hasn't been cleaned. Do you need me to tidy up a bit?"

"It's okay, everything seems pretty clean." Pang Qian pulled him over to the bed. The two of them sat next to each other. "Stop doing all this stuff. Come talk with me."

"Talk about what?" His voice was gentle, still carrying E City's accent. "Pang Pang, I have to head back soon. The other teachers have to rest too, so I can't let them take care of Dou Dou for too long. Sometimes he's a bit of a troublemaker."

"Dou Dou, Dou Dou. Do you know how many times you've said Dou Dou?"

Pang Qian picked up a pillow and smashed it onto Gu Mingxi. He didn't try to dodge it, but just watched her with a smile. "What's wrong? Are you jealous of Dou Dou?"

"Hmph, I'm not just jealous of Dou Dou. There's someone else I'm jealous over! I saw that Teacher Ji treats you pretty well." Pang Pang's voice dripped with sourness. "Gu Mingxi, you're really involved in too many romances, you know!"

"Teacher Ji does help me a lot. She's a female, so sometimes when I can't deal with Dou Dou, I'll ask for her help," Gu Mingxi said evenly. "Teacher Ji came to teach in underdeveloped areas, and she's only been here for a year. She was originally a white collar worker. We don't have many teachers, but there are a lot of classes, so everyone is extremely tired after classes. A girl like her from faraway was able to persevere for an entire year. I don't think it was an easy thing."

Pang Qian was originally a bit jealous of Ji Xiu'er, but hearing what Gu



Mingxi had to say, she knew that she'd been rather petty. After all, leaving life behind in a bustling city to come to such a remote place to teach, with an almost non-existent salary... That kind of courage alone was enough to be admired.

Gu Mingxi thought about what else Pang Qian might need. He went to the bathroom cabinet and took out a new toothbrush and towel. He said to her, "There are snacks in the cabinet if you want to eat them. There's nothing hidden here (Note: Or maybe 'locked here?'), so you can use whatever. If you need anything else, just call me. I won't turn off my phone." He stood in front of her, lowered his head and kissed her forehead. "Pang Pang, I have to go."

"Tomorrow's Sunday. I'll head to the school to meet you, or do you want to come back here?" Pang Qian looked at him with a hurt expression. She said, "I want to talk to you, to listen to you tell me what's been going on with you. I have a lot that I want to say to you too. One night won't be enough."

Gu Mingxi smiled as he looked at her. "I'll arrange for one of the teachers to watch Dou Dou tomorrow, and then I'll come over to hang out with you. Sanya has a lot of fun places to go to. But I have to work on a test paper and get ready for class at night."

Pang Qian asked, "Will you have to pull an all-nighter?"

Gu Mingxi thought about it and said, "Probably. It's almost time for the semester finals, and I haven't done any of the work I needed to do this weekend."

"Then you don't have to come over. I'll go find you. We'll just spend a bit of time together. It doesn't really matter what we do. And I really want to see what you look like when you're preparing for class." Pang Qian stood on her tiptoes and kissed his cheek. "Hurry back, but be careful. When you get back, give me a call."

Gu Mingxi left the keys for Pang Qian. As he put on his shoes in front of the door, he took a look back at her. His gaze was gentle and pure, and there was a smile on his face. Pang Qian's heart thumped. She took two steps forward and then leapt at him. She wrapped her arms around him and looked up at him. Gu Mingxi looked down, and then the two of them suddenly kissed.



Love really wasn't something you needed lessons for. All that was needed was two hearts that would beat as one. Even Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, these slowpokes in love, could enjoy the sweet taste of love on their own.

They stood next to the wall. Gu Mingxi pushed Pang Qian against the wall, his broad shoulders and tall body enveloping her, two young bodies tightly bound together. Their burning cheeks rubbed against each other, soft lips entangled, a familiar breath between their lips and teeth. Pang Qian's heart was pounding. She missed the scent of Gu Mingxi's body. Completely absorbed in the moment, her hands grabbed onto his back. And then she felt something strange under her abdomen.

Pang Qian was gutsy and also very curious. Her right hand moved lower and lower, until she touched that particular area.

Oh... The little bird had become a big bird, lightly and happily rubbing against her.

Pang Qian went in for a surprise attack and Gu Mingxi's body stiffened. He closed his eyes and furrowed his brows, breathless as he released her lips. He bit at her ear, voice hoarse and in protest. "Pang Qian, where are you touching?"

"You're the one who... touched me first!" Pang Qian wasn't afraid of him and even made a small pinch through the fabric. It felt very strange, different to when she'd helped him pee. She boldly said, "What, it's all mine anyway! I can't touch it?"

"Pang Pang..."

Gu Mingxi's face was completely red. He was a healthy man, but on this regard, he was both reserved and restrained. He opened his eyes to look at Pang Qian. She really couldn't go against his warm and innocent eyes, so she guiltily moved her hand away.

Gu Mingxi straightened up awkwardly, secretly glancing down at that place on his body. His pants were loose and his shirt was long, so it wasn't very obvious.

His body felt distressed, but at this moment, he could only keep enduring.



He and Pang Qian were both adults and knew this was a very normal thing, but they'd just finally met after so long and neither of them were so unconstrained (by convention). They tacitly agreed not to mention this again.

Gu Mingxi's voice was still low and hoarse. "Pang Pang, it's late. I really have to go back."

Pang Qian's cheeks were flushed and rosy. "I'll send you out to get a taxi."

"Mm."

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 94

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 94 Dou Dou's Plea

*I promise you, I'll be Gu Mingxi's two hands.*

---

After seeing him out of the residence and sending him off in a taxi, Pang Qian finally wobbled back to his house on her own.

She was the only one left in the house. Pang Qian started examining her surroundings. She opened the cabinets in the living room and looked at the snacks that Gu Mingxi had mentioned earlier. She knew that it had all been bought for Dou Dou to eat, but they were all very familiar to Pang Qian.

Potato chips, beef jerky, lollipops, chocolate... They were all things that she loved to eat.

When she went to the bathroom, Pang Qian saw that Gu Mingxi had installed a smart toilet. She tried it out. There was a warm stream of water to wash your bottom and also a dryer. Pang Qian was extremely amused. She thought to herself, when she and Gu Mingxi got a house, they would have to add a smart toilet as well. It was so useful and helpful.

And then she became embarrassed by this thought. She recalled earlier when Gu Mingxi's body had changed. Her face was bright red as she hugged a pillow and rolled around on the sofa. Thankfully there was no one else present.

After she showered, Pang Qian went to the bedroom. Gu Mingxi's room was decorated as if for a male, except for the shorter desk. Actually, his room wasn't much different from any ordinary room. Next to his desk, there was a bookshelf. Pang Qian stood in front of it and saw that there was a lot of variety on his bookshelf. Biographies, best sellers, economic analyses, and a lot of professional art books.



There was also a shelf filled with Dou Dou's children's books. This way, it really looked like a father's bookshelf.

There was also a picture frame on the shelf, the only one in the entire house. It was a photo of Gu Mingxi and Li Yan. Pang Qian knew that at that time Li Han was already sick, because she wore a cap and her skin was sallow. But while she snuggled with Gu Mingxi, she had a warm and kind smile.

Pang Qian picked up the frame and spoke quietly to the Li Han in the photo. "Auntie, don't worry, I've found Gu Mingxi. In the future, he won't be alone anymore."

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That evening, she laid on Gu Mingxi's large bed. Holding onto his pillow, she slept soundly through the night.

After Gu Mingxi returned to school, he called Pang Qian to let her know he'd gotten back safely. Then he went over to Ji Xiu'er's dorm to bring Dou Dou back. Dou Dou hung his head low, looking rather glum.

He was still a child. Although he'd read Gu Mingxi's 'My Miss Crab,' he wasn't able to understand the meaning behind it. The other teachers had told him that the pretty lady who came today was Teacher Gu's Miss Crab, and Dou Dou thought, Teacher Gu was really going to leave.

When he was brushing his teeth before bed, he felt very troubled and suddenly started crying. He even accidentally swallowed a mouthful of toothpaste foam and started coughing as if he couldn't breathe. Gu Mingxi was given a fright and ran to the bathroom. Dou Dou was standing in front of the sink and rinsing out his mouth, his eyes red.

Gu Mingxi knew what Dou Dou was thinking, and even he felt a bit sour inside. He suddenly thought that it seemed like in his life, he was always parting with others.

After Dou Dou was done washing up, he helped Gu Mingxi squeeze out the toothpaste as usual. After he filled a cup with water, he prepared a towel and placed it to the side. He walked shyly over to Gu Mingxi and said, "Teacher Gu, go wash up. After your shower, leave your clothes. I'll wash them tomorrow."



Gu Mingxi looked at him for awhile, and then he got up and went to the bathroom.

When he was done, he looked at the basin of clothes. He shook his head and smiled, and then sat down on his chair and started scrubbing them with his feet.

He returned to his room after that, and Dou Dou was already asleep. Gu Mingxi sat down next to him and called softly, “Dou Dou.”

“...”

“Dou Dou.”

“...”

“Ding Jiankang.”

Dou Dou’s voice came out from under his blankets, “Teacehr Gu, I want to sleep.”

His voice carried a tearful sound, and it was obvious he was crying under the covers. Gu Mingxi felt sorry. He understood Dou Dou’s fears. It was just like when he was younger and his mother asked him if he wanted a younger sibling. Gu Mingxi had panicked then. He’d always felt that if his parents had another kid, they wouldn’t want him anymore.

Gu Mingxi knew that no matter what he said to Dou Dou, it would be pointless. He wouldn’t understand it anyway. Gu Mingxi tucked in Dou Dou’s blanket and then went over to his own bed.

On Sunday morning, Pang Qian woke up early and arrived at Hope of Children Primary School. She wasn’t wearing a dress anymore, but instead, she wore a t-shirt and jeans with sneakers. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail, and her face was bare.

Gu Mingxi had already woken up and had already made a portion of breakfast for Pang Qian.

Eating his congee and pancakes, Pang Qian expressed their deliciousness loudly. Dou Dou squinted at her. There were six pancakes on the table, and she’d eaten three on her own.

Dou Dou started calculating. If he ate two, then wouldn’t Teacher Gu only



have one left? In the end, Dou Dou just ate one pancake and said he was full.

Gu Mingxi asked, "Does it taste bad? You usually eat two."

Dou Dou couldn't lie. He pouted and said, "The last one is for Teacher Gu."

Pang Qian looked over embarrassed. "Looks like I've eaten too much..."

Gu Mingxi looked at the two of them and couldn't help laughing out loud. "Eat, eat. If it's tasty, I'll make a few more. We have the flour for it anyway. Eat until you're full."

After breakfast, Gu Mingxi went to his office to grade exams. He called Dou Dou along to work on his homework. Naturally, Pang Qian tagged along. She rested her chin in her palms and watched with great interest as Gu Mingxi graded the paper. He taught three subjects. Four classes total from fifth and sixth grade for math and English, and then he also taught art. He really had a lot of work on his plate.

The teacher's office was in the academic building. Six people in one room. Gu Mingxi's desk was short and he leaned against his chair. He held down the test paper with his left foot and marked them with a red pen using his right foot. Seeing how bored Pang Qian was, he pushed a pile of already corrected exams in front of her. "Help me total the scores."

Pang Qian was very excited, looking at these math problems from so long ago. She said, "When I was younger, I hated these kinds of problems about the distance between A and B. A and B were headed different directions, and A was going this fast and B was going that fast. Nonsense questions like that. Tell me, what does when A and B meet have anything to do with me?"

Gu Mingxi laughed. "Actually, it's just about fostering a child's logical thinking and math abilities. There are really some questions that seem pointless, but you were able to reach this point in your life because of those insignificant questions. If you don't have the foundation for it, you won't be able to grow, so I'm pretty strict on these kids. If their math foundation is poor in primary school, they'll have a hard time when they get to junior high.

Pang Qian stuck to him and smiled. "Seems like you really like being a teacher. Being my personal tutor for all those years wasn't enough for you. Now you're



the king of the children.”

Gu Mingxi turned to look at her. “I’m very satisfied being able to find this job. After all, with my physical condition, it’s not that there’s a lot of work I’m unable to do, but rather, most people are unwilling to give me the chance. The fact that the principal was willing to use me was already very touching to me.”

“I understand.” Pang Qian thought for a moment, and then said, “But when we get back to E City, you probably won’t be able to work as a teacher anymore. Gu Mingxi, when that time comes, you can keep painting. I heard Qi mention that putting out a book requires a lot of work from you too, right?”

Gu Mingxi stopped working. He said, “Pang Pang, I want to talk to you about something. I’ve been teaching my sixth grade students since they were in third grade. I want to be able to teach them until June, to see them graduate and get into junior high. So, give me another half a year. I’ll go back to E City with you in the summer.”

Pang Qian grew nervous with his first sentence, but when he finished, she smiled. “Of course. When the kids graduate, I’ll come to see their graduation ceremony.”

Just then, Dou Dou pushed between them and said, “Teacher Gu! I don’t know how to do this question!”

Gu Mingxi said, “I’m grading exams right now. Let Auntie Crab have a look.”

Pang Qian called out eagerly, “I’ll help, I’ll help!”

Dou Dou blinked his eyes and said, “Forget it, I can do it on my own.”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi was very focused on grading. He saw that Pang Qian was bored again after sitting with him for an hour, so he told her to find Teacher Chen to play ping pong.

On the school courtyard, there was a cement table tennis table. Teacher Chen welcomed the challenge and played with Pang Qian. At first, he looked down on her a bit because she was a girl. But when they started playing, he realized that Pang Qian’s skills weren’t that bad.



So he also started to get serious. They were playing in full swing under the sun, and the teachers in the dorm were attracted out by their cries.

Dou Dou, who was doing his homework, also grew distracted. Gu Mingxi saw him scratching at his ears and told him quietly, “Dou Dou, take a break. Go out and play a bit.”

Dou Dou immediately dropped his pencil and, just like a monkey, he jumped out.

Pang Qian’s opponent had already changed to Teacher Song. She was covered in sweat from the game, but she carried a carefree smile. When they took a break, she looked over at Dou Dou on the sidelines. She asked, “Dou Dou, can you play?”

Dou Dou shook his head. Pang Qian waved him over, “Come here, I’ll teach you.”

Dou Dou walked over boldly. Pang Qian handed him the paddle and showed him how to hold it. She caught a glimpse of his left hand and, just as Gu Mingxi had told her, his middle finger was deformed. No matter how his other fingers moved, his middle finger was always lopsided.

Being so close to him, she could also see the scar on the back of his head. At least ten cm long, and no hair grew out from where the scar was. It was a very astonishing sight.

Pang Qian held his small hand in hers and patiently taught him to hit the ball. Teacher Chen assisted their practice. Dou Dou was very smart and quickly understood the rules of the game. Pang Qian played a game with him. She served the ball to him and Dou Dou waved his paddle to return it. He really was just a seven year old child. Gradually, he started laughing.

When Gu Mingxi went over, Pang Qian was playing against Teacher Wang. Dou Dou was on the side, jumping and cheering for her. He turned and saw Gu Mingxi and called out loudly, “Teacher Gu, Auntie Crab is really good! She was even part of the national team before!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian laughed where she was standing. Her face was flushed and she was



covered in sweat, her bangs stuck to her forehead. With the strong sun shining down on her body, Gu Mingxi felt a moment of despondence. He felt as if he'd traveled back into the past. In his memories, Pang Pang was the world's most bright, warm, simple, and happy girl.

Dou Dou kept secretly observing this Auntie Crab, who had fallen so suddenly from the sky into their world. All in all, he felt she wasn't so bad. She was pretty and loved laughing, always chattering on non-stop. She taught him to play ping pong and played with him. She even tutored him with his homework.

Most importantly, Teacher Gu really looked like he liked her. Dou Dou had seen several times, Teacher Gu's eyes were quietly following Auntie Crab around. His gaze followed her and then he would start laughing.

But Auntie Crab was also kind of annoying at times, for example, during meals.

For lunch on Sunday, Gu Mingxi had cooked a few dishes. They had leftovers, and when it was time for dinner, Gu Mingxi made three bowls of seafood noodles. He, Dou Dou, and Pang Qian ate in their dorm.

While they were eating, Pang Qian thought that the noodles were too bland. Gu Mingxi told her to add some hot sauce, so she did. But after she ate a few bites, she suddenly told Gu Mingxi, "Aiya, I added too much hot sauce. It's so spicy!"

Gu Mingxi looked at her red bowl and put down his chopsticks. He stood up and said, "Don't eat it. I'll make you another bowl."

Pang Qian quickly pulled at his trousers and said, "It's okay, I'm not hungry. You eat first. Your noodles will get cold."

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and glanced at her. He said, "Then, how about you eat my bowl? I only had two bites."

Pang Qian smiled and said, "If I eat yours, then what will you eat?"

"I'll eat your bowl. I can eat spicy food."

He spoke very evenly, and Pang Qian immediately switched their bowls. When she was eating his noodles, she smiled happily.

Gu Mingxi took a bite of her noodles and frowned. "Why did you add so much



hot sauce? It's so spicy."

Pang Qian said, "Who told you to make the noodles so bland?" As she said that, she added a bit of hot sauce to her new bowl. Her face was covered in sweat as she ate.

Dou Dou didn't think that the noodles were bland at all. He just felt that this Auntie Crab was really something.

He was a bit worried that Teacher Gu would be bullied by Auntie Crab.

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After dinner, Dou Dou immediately cleaned up the dishes. Pang Qian felt bad watching as the little kid went to do the dishes, so she got up and went to the kitchen. She said, "Dou Dou, I'll wash them. Go watch TV with Teacher Gu."

Dou Dou looked up at her. He wasn't much taller than the counter, so he had to use a stool when he washed the dishes. Pang Qian saw that he didn't move and quickly carried him down. Then she started washing the dishes herself.

Dou Dou stood blankly for a moment, but didn't leave the kitchen. After a moment, he walked over to Pang Qian and said in a small voice, "Auntie Crab, are you here to take Teacher Gu home?"

Pang Qian was startled. She looked into Dou Dou's pure eyes and nodded, "Yes."

Dou Dou's head dropped as he held onto the counter. He said, "Auntie Crab, will you get married with Teacher Gu?"

Pang Qian couldn't help laughing at his serious and formal tone. She asked, "Why do you ask?"

"..." Dou Dou hesitated a bit and then said, "Because Teacher Gu doesn't have arms. If you get married with him, you can't say he's troublesome."

Dou Dou was still small, his voice clean and crisp. He said whatever he wanted to say. After he spoke, he quickly added, "Auntie Crab, you don't have to be afraid. Teacher Gu doesn't ask for help much. He can do a lot of things on his own. It's just that sometimes he takes a long time to do something. In those times, don't rush him. He'll feel bad."



Pang Qian was really touched, her words stuck in her throat. She quietly listened to Dou Dou continue. “Teacher Gu can buy food and cook. His food is really delicious. But when he’s finished, he can’t plate the food, so you have to help him. Teacher Gu can wash clothes, wash the floor, wash dishes. He can even fix computers! Every time Teacher Ji’s computer breaks, Teacher Gu’s the one who fixes it. Oh, and Teacher Gu can sew on buttons! He uses his feet and it’s really amazing! But Teacher Gu showers slowly, and sometimes... Sometimes I help him wash his back. I-I-I help him wipe after he uses the toilet. Wh-when I was younger, Teacher Gu helped me wipe by butt too...” His voice grew faint. “Oh... But this... This... You’re a girl, how can you do it!”

Dou Dou grabbed his head, conflicted. Pang Qian chortled, but her eyes were wet.

Finally, Dou Dou said, “Auntie Crab, if you get married with Teacher Gu, don’t ever get divorced, okay? When my parents got divorced, my dad kept on crying. Crying and crying, and then he hit me. Teacher Gu told me that his parents got divorced too, and his mom was really sad and hurt. So Auntie Crab, don’t get divorced with Teacher Gu. Otherwise he’ll feel hurt.”

A seven year old kid already knew what ‘divorce’ meant. He was like a small grown-up seriously entrusting Gu Mingxi to Pang Qian. He raised his head and said to Pang Qian, “Teacher Gu always says that I’m his two hands. Auntie Crab, after you take Teacher Gu home, will you be his two hands?”

Pang Qian crouched down and, without regard to her bubble covered hands, she hugged Dou Dou tightly. She said, “I’ll be his two hands. Dou Dou, don’t worry.”

Dou Dou’s eyes were red. “You have to promise me.”

“I promise you, I’ll be Gu Mingxi’s two hands.”

“You have to do it for your whole life.”

“Mm, I’ll do it for my whole life.”

Dou Dou finally smiled. “When you get married, can I go to the wedding banquet?”

“Of course!” Pang Qian also smiled as she pat his little head. “When it’s



summer break, come to E City to play.”

When they finished washing the dishes, Pang Qian held Dou Dou’s hand and happily walked out of the kitchen. Gu Mingxi looked at them suspiciously and asked, “What were you talking about in the kitchen?”

“It’s a secret!” Pang Qian and Dou Dou both called out.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 95

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 95 Heading Home With Mixed Feelings

*Gu Mingxi, welcome home!*

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On Monday, Pang Qian returned to the primary school and found the atmosphere tranquil and relaxed, distinctly different from the weekend.

The school ground were filled with students. When class was over, big and small kids rushed out to the playground to play wildly. From their clothes, they all looked like they were from ordinary families. When the bell sounded for classes to resume, they all ran back into classroom. Standing at the playground, you could hear the sounds of students in the two story building reading out loud.

Pang Qian outside the window and looked in at Gu Mingxi.

She stood outside the back door to the room so none of the students noticed her. They were holding their books and following along as Gu Mingxi read out loud in English. Gu Mingxi was at the lectern reading, when he lifted his head and saw Pang Qian. He smiled briefly and then continued reading seriously.

Pang Qian held her arms and watched him quietly. She recalled the last time they'd met six years ago in Shanghai. That was probably the most distressing time in Gu Mingxi's life. Pang Qian occasionally remembered the parting look in his eyes back then.

Time had left a lot of marks on his body. Under the Hainan sun, his skin had gotten darker, but he was also more rugged and healthy now. His hair was trimmed neatly, the back of his neck shaved cleanly. Under the eyebrows that were hidden by his bangs, there was a pair of quiet and reserved eyes.

He had a clean cut face, very manly and handsome, but there was always the trace of a smile on his face. He never minded the strange looks from strangers,



and it never stressed him out. He would very naturally ask others to help when he needed it. For example, he'd have the taxi driver take the money from his pocket, or he'd ask one of the other teachers to bring in the recorder for English class.

He was different from his time as a student. Today's Gu Mingxi didn't have a single piece of name brand clothing. He wore sandals on his feet all year round, but he was always sure to keep them clean. He bent over and turned the page of the English book on the lectern, his attention focused on the class. Once in awhile, he would lift his foot up high to write on the blackboard.

His posture looked very strange, but the students in his class didn't seem to think so. As he wrote across the board from left to right, he would have to move his body too. Sometimes he wouldn't bother putting down his right leg, and he would just hop over on his left leg. And when he hopped, his shirt sleeves would swing in the air. From outside the room, Pang Qian's heart followed along and jumped.

Ji Xiu'er was carrying her books as she stopped next to Pang Qian. In a quiet voice, she said, "Ms. Pang."

Pang Qian turned around and saw Ji Xiu'er smiling at her. She said, "Ms. Pang, is Teacher Gu returning to E City soon?"

Pang Qian opened her mouth but didn't end up saying anything. Instead, she nodded.

Ji Xiu'er looked into the classroom window at Gu Mingxi and said, "He should go back. You know, I've been here for a year, but I've never seen Teacher Gu as happy as he was today."

Pang Qian, "..."

"I was probably 'My Miss Crab's first ready," Ji Xiu'er said. "I would watch as he was drawing. At the time, I asked him if Miss Crab really existed. Teacher Gu smiled and told me he didn't know. He said that maybe in every boy's heart, there existed a Miss Crab, and in every girl's memories, there existed a Mister Ostrich. Sometimes we just don't know it."

She forced herself to hold in her tears as she said, "I really envy you, that you



were able to find your Mister Ostrich. I'm also happy for Teacher Gu as well, that his time of bitterness can end and he can start his journey of sweetness."

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The bell rang to signal the end of class. Pang Qian entered the classroom and saw a group of sixth graders surrounding Gu Mingxi, asking him questions. He patiently explained to them and finally realized that Pang Qian was present. Each one of the kids started shouting out, "Teacher Gu! Is this your girlfriend?"

Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi carry his recorder, books, and lessons. Gu Mingxi turned back to look at her and smiled at the students. "That's right, this is my girlfriend."

Several jolly students rushed to shout out, "Hello, Teacher Gu's wife!"

Pang Qian nearly exploded with laughter.

Pang Qian stayed in Sanya with Gu Mingxi and Dou Dou for New Year's. Every day, she would sit around at the school. When Gu Mingxi went to class, she would stay in the dorm and watch TV. Occasionally, she would go online and take care of some work.

At lunchtime, Pang Qian followed Gu Mingxi to get an employee's meal box. The food was very simple but Pang Qian didn't care. Gu Mingxi always gave the meat in his lunch to her, and Pang Qian didn't refuse it, shoveling the food into her mouth. A delighted smile appeared on Gu Mingxi's face.

When the New Year's break came, Gu Mingxi finally had some free time, so he took Pang Qian and Dou Dou around for two days.

They went to Wuzhizhou Island, Tianya Haijiao, and even went to see the Guanyin of the South Sea of Sanya. In the evening, they returned to Gu Mingxi's house by Sanya Bay for a seafood dinner.

Being able to keep such a hyper kid like Dou Dou under control, Pang Qian felt very happy. This was her first true date with Gu Mingxi. She let herself indulge and stayed right beside Gu Mingxi, sometimes wrapping her arms around his waist for a hug.

The taste of dating was so wonderful. The temperature of Gu Mingxi's body, his eyes, his smile, and his scent all kept Pang Qian infatuated. The beach at



Sanya was a romantic haven, and Pang Qian walked along the shallow waters with Gu Mingxi. When the feeling was right, she would stand on her tip toes and look up at him before enjoying a deep kiss.

Dou Dou covered his eyes as he stood to the side. As he called out, “Teacher Gu, shame, shame! I’m not looking!” he would still spread his fingers and secretly take a glance at the intimate scene before him.

After New Year’s, every company entered their end of year hustle period, and Jialai Investments was no different. Even though she was on vacation, her business phone kept ringing with call after call.

Gu Mingxi often heard her answering the phone. Sometimes it was her team leader, sometimes it was a coworker, and sometimes it was even a client.

When she spoke about work, Gu Mingxi could understand about half of her conversation. Sometimes Pang Qian would speak completely in English as she was communicating with Europe or Hong Kong. Her English was very fluent and her tone was good. Probably because it was riddled with jargon used in the financial sector, but no matter how carefully Gu Mingxi tried to listen, he couldn’t understand.

Gu Mingxi realized that while Pang Qian often giggled about and seemed rather simple-minded, when she answered a work related call, she changed completely. When she spoke to clients, her voice was gentle, soft, and polite. When she spoke to her subordinates, she was concise, a bit tough and sometimes cold. When she spoke to her team leader, she changed once again.

“Team Leader...” Pang Qian was laying on Gu Mingxi’s bed, grumbling into the phone. “I’m on vacation. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen my boyfriend, so can’t you just help me take care of it for a bit. We agreed on two weeks vacation, and that I’d be back on January 8th... I know it’s really busy at the end of the year... Okay, I’ll try to get back a few days earlier.”

After she hung up the phone, Pang Qian raised her head to look over at Gu Mingxi, who was sitting on the edge of the bed. She apologized, “I’m sorry, it’s busy at work. I’ll probably have to head back early.”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. “It’s okay, work is important. Look, you’ve been here for several days now, but I haven’t been able to spend much time with you.



You're always waiting around at school, so you must be really bored."

Pang Qian plopped down next to him and hugged him. She said, "It's not boring. As long as I'm with you, it's good."

The day she left, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took a walk along the sea together.

There was a bit of beach nearby the primary school that had palm trees. It was the only place there that hadn't been turned into a resort area.

The sand there wasn't very fine. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walked along the shore, side by side. There was no one else around. The only sounds came from the waves crashing against the rocks and whistling sound of the sea breeze.

Away from the steel and concrete cities, life here was very simple and pure. Pang Qian could feel Gu Mingxi's mood. In the past days, he rarely spoke to her about his hardships in the past few years. What he spoke about most was the happiness he felt after he came to Sanya.

Gu Mingxi would talk about his students, as if each of them were a part of his family. The primary school was a Hope school (Note: See [Project Hope](#)), so the school facilities, software, and teachers couldn't compare to those at public schools. Most of the students that enrolled there were kids from migrant families or families in difficult situations.

Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian that he felt that for some kids, studying was the most fair and suitable path to change their fate. So when it came to teaching, he never slacked off.

"I always thought you were doing post-graduate studies," Gu Mingxi said. "Pang Pang, why didn't end up going back to school?"

Pang Qian looked at him. "Work is busy, with one job coming in after another. If I were to tell Team Leader that I was going to resign and go back to school, he'd probably kill me."

She told Gu Mingxi about her relationship with Zou Liwen. From Shanghai to E City, Zou Liwen had taught Pang Qian a lot of things. And if it weren't for him, during the financial crisis, the then-rookie Pang Qian would have probably been out of a job.



Pang Qian smiled and said, “Actually, sometimes I think that Team Leader and I are really alike. Working under him, I really have peace of mind. If he weren’t so cold and different from you, I really might have fallen for him.”

Gu Mingxi squinted at her and asked, “What kind of feeling do I give off?”

“It’s...” Pang Qian looked up at him and laughed. “When you were hovering around me every day, I didn’t think that there was anything special about you, and sometimes you even felt annoying. But later on, when you disappeared from my side, I couldn’t find another person who was just like you.”

She gently embraced him and said, “Gu Mingxi, you spoiled me rotten, you know. Spoiling me for so many years, I started feeling like everything was a matter of course. It wasn’t until afterwards that I realized that no one else would spoil me the same way.”

Gu Mingxi stood on the beach, the tranquil sea beside him. The waves gently kissed the rocks, the wind blew at the hairs by their ears. A cold, crescent moon hung in the sky, the white moonlight casting down onto the water. The light on the waves shimmered like silver scales.

There was a lighthouse in the distance, its red light shining to the sea to guide the sea vessels home. Gu Mingxi looked at the lighthouse, and the wind blew against his empty shirt sleeves. He didn’t say anything, but he gave Pang Qian an answer in his heart.

—Yes, Pang Pang. I also wouldn’t be able to spoil another girl the same way.

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Three days after New Year’s, Pang Qian’s vacation time was over. She reluctantly bid farewell to Gu Mingxi and flew back to the busy work in the city.

She told her parents about Gu Mingxi, but she didn’t tell them that he would be coming back to E City for the (Chinese) New Year. Pang Shuisheng was very excited, but Jin Ai’hua was a bit glum.

When she took a walk with Pang Qian, Jin Ai’hua asked her daughter, “What kind of work is Gu Mingxi doing now?”

“Primary school teacher,” Pang Qian replied. “He teaches English, math, and art.”



“Does he have a degree?”

“No,” Pang Qian shook her head.

“He never went back to school?”

Pang Qian continued shaking her head, “No.”

“So he only has a high school diploma?” Jin Ai’hua was both surprised and sorry. “It’s a shame. Gu Mingxi was such a good student.”

Pang Qian was speechless.

Over the weekend, she went shopping with Zheng Qiaoqiao. Pang Qian dragged her to the male clothing section to pick out a down coat. She also bought a bunch of male winter clothing, top to bottom, inside and outside, filling up eight shopping bags.

Zheng Qiaoqiao was stupefied. “Crab, you have a boyfriend?”

Pang Qian’s face was all smiles as she nodded, “Mm!”

“Who is it? The one from the bank before? Yu something or other?”

“Nope, you know him.”

“I know him?” Zheng Qiaoqiao was startled. “It’s not Xie Yi, is it?”

“Have you gone crazy!” Pang Qian shouted out loud. She dragged Zheng Qiaoqiao to the floor below, to a book store. Pang Qian picked up a copy of ‘My Miss Crab’ and handed it to Zheng Qiaoqiao. “You’re so behind on the news. Haven’t you heard about this book? It’s really popular now. Hurry and buy a copy to read when you get home. After you read it, you’ll understand.”

Zheng Qiaoqiao looked at the image of an ostrich and crab on the cover of the book. Surprised, she asked, “You found Gu Mingxi?”

Pang Qian smiled, “That’s right!”

Gu Mingxi’s winter break started early. After the final exams concluded, Dou Dou’s mother came from Guangdong to bring him home for (Chinese) New Year. Gu Mingxi called Pang Qian and told her he’d already bought a plane ticket back to E City. He’d stay at Shark’s place for the time being.

“I haven’t seen Shark in a long time, and I miss him,” Gu Mingxi said. “He said



he'd close his shop in Shanghai a bit earlier for the New Year's and would head back to E City. He said if I headed back a bit earlier, we could have a drink together."

Pang Qian worried, "I originally wanted to go back to pick you up from Sanya. Will you be okay taking the plane on your own?"

"I'll be fine." Gu Mingxi laughed lightly. "Every year, I go back to Z City to visit my mom's grave, and I go on my own then too. I can take care of myself, Pang Pang. Don't worry."

"I'll go to Z City with you this Qingming (Note: also known as 'Tomb Sweeping Day')," Pang Qian said. "I'll come with you to visit Auntie, okay?"

Gu Mingxi responded, "My mom will definitely be very happy to see you visit."

The day before he departed, Gu Mingxi sat in his Sanya Bay house packing up. He worked slowly and with much effort, but he wasn't impatient at all. He just continued to slowly pack his things.

He sat on the floor, using his feet to fold his clothes one by one and put them into plastic bags. Finally, he put the plastic bags neatly into his backpack. Midway through packing, he stood up and headed to the bathroom to grab his toothbrush, a towel, a razor...

He'd moved many times. At the start, it was his mother who packed his things for him. But later on, he was left on his own.

He learned how to pack up his things and call for a moving company to move them for him. As for himself, he only carried a single, large backpack.

In his bag, he put his most important belongings. His passport, ID card, bank card, a photo of him and his mother, a picture of Pang Qian, and some gadgets.

He didn't want to risk having these items mailed because he'd once lost a box of things in the mail. Gu Mingxi felt terrible thinking that he might lose the things that belonged to him and Li Han, so every time he moved, he would keep certain things on his body.

After he finished packing, Gu Mingxi didn't sleep until late. He got off his bed and went to turn the light on in the living room.



He stood in the middle of the room and looked around. His house was decorated very simply because at the time, he didn't really have any money. He remembered when he first arrived in Sanya. It was a winter day and he'd flown in from the cold Northern regions. When he got off the plane, with the sun shining down on his head, Gu Mingxi felt a bit dizzy.

Shark waited for him at the terminal. When he saw him, he quickly helped him take off his coat. "The winters here are 30 degrees (86 F), be careful about heat stroke!"

As the taxi drove down the streets of Sanya, Gu Mingxi looked around curiously. The sky here was cloudy or foggy, and there wasn't a biting wind. Instead, there was a warm sun and clear blue skies decorated with white clouds. As the car drove along the coast, they passed coconut trees, the drooping branches of large banyan trees, and bougainvilleas in full bloom. The Southern feel was very charming.

Shark was the one who first found the building on the Sanya Bay with a great sea view. He brought Gu Mingxi there to check out houses, and when Gu Mingxi stepped out onto the balcony, he was completely mesmerized by the view of the sea.

Shark pat his shoulders and lit a smoke. He said, "Not bad, right? I knew you'd like it. They have smaller apartments too, so think about it."

Gu Mingxi really liked one of the smaller places. At the time, the house was all grey and roughly done, but the sea was still visible from the balcony. He walked around the house several times, thinking to himself that this is where he would settle down.

In the past few years, Gu Mingxi was like an ant moving house. He gradually brought things home, and then in the end, he brought back a little boy.

After Dou Dou came along, the house got a lot noisier and messier. But Gu Mingxi felt that this made it feel more like a home.

Gu Mingxi wouldn't deny that he'd genuinely considered settling down in Sanya. Even if it was thousands of miles away from his hometown, even if he had no relatives in this place, he'd thought before that he could be a happy island dweller here.



The past only existed in his dreams. The ideals and ambitions he once had, the people he wanted to work hard for, none of them were by his side anymore.

Gu Mingxi sometimes felt as if he were in a trance. Without realizing it, step by step, he'd ended up in this place.

When he walked on the school grounds, the students would run over to him and happily call out, "Teacher Gu!"

In his sixth grade class, there were two students, a boy and a girl. The boy was originally from Guangxi and his parents were working in Sanya. The girl was a Sanya native. The two of them had grown up together, lived close to each other, and went to and from school together. They were especially good friends.

But before final exams, the girl had appeared in Gu Mingxi's office. She cried as she said that the boy would be returning back to Guangxi after graduation.

Look, right beside us, there were always stories of parting. Gu Mingxi could only comfort her by saying that when she went to junior high, she would meet lots of new friends. When that time came, it wouldn't be so hard.

"You can write letters or call each other or chat on QQ," Gu Mingxi said. "If there's a chance, you can even meet up again."

"What if we can't meet again?! (crying sounds)" the girl cried in despair. "Teacher Gu, I don't want new friends! I don't want to separate from Qiu Zixuan!"

Gu Mingxi looked at this girl quietly and didn't try to console her again. No matter what anyone had to say, their words would pale here. No one else would understand the bitterness and pain of (some one else's) goodbye.

She finally dried her tears and left the office. Gu Mingxi sat at his desk, staring ahead blankly. Awhile later, he lifted his head and looked out the window.

Outside the window, the sky was blue. Knowing that he would be leaving here, he couldn't help feeling a deep sense of sadness and a bit apprehensive of the future.

The next morning, Gu Mingxi woke up early and carried his backpack into Sanya Phoenix Airport.



A volunteer at the airport helped him with his security check. When he boarded the plane, the Sanya sky was clear and the sun was shining, with an air temperature of 25 C. Three hours later, the plane landed at the E City airport. Gu Mingxi got off the plane and went to board the airport bus. He wasn't wearing much and the wind blew against his face. He was a bit unaccustomed to it now and he stopped in his steps.

He walked out of the terminal with the crowd and Gu Mingxi found a familiar figure.

A coat prepared for him was hanging on Pang Qian's arm as she waved vigorously towards him. "Gu Mingxi! Over here!"

Gu Mingxi walked over to her, his swaying, empty shirt sleeves catching the eyes of others. But then they saw a young woman rush toward him and throw herself at him, before embracing him tightly.

She stood on her toes and gave him a sweet kiss, and then quickly pulled off his backpack to help him put a coat on. Then she looked up at him, her face full of joy, and said, "Gu Mingxi, welcome home!"

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 96 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 96 (Part 1) | Unexpected Surprise

*Gu Mingxi, can you say it in a way that I can understand?*

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Gu Mingxi got into Pang Qian's car, a red Sagitar. There was a little grey wolf hanging from the rear view mirror and the seat was covered with a Mickey Mouse cushion. There was also a Yoyo and Cici (monkeys) stuck on the dashboard. This was obviously a girl's car. When the car started, those little monkeys would start bobbing. Gu Mingxi stared at them for a moment and then smiled silently.

He asked Pang Qian, "When did you buy a car?"

"Ah, the middle of last year. I've only been back a little longer than a year."

"Are you planning on going back to Shanghai? There should be more opportunity for expansion there."

She didn't answer right away, but after awhile, she said, "I probably won't be going back any time soon."

As Pang Qian drove Gu Mingxi around the streets of E City, she realized that the man beside had been silent the whole time.

She didn't disturb him. It took an hour to get from the airport to Shark's place. Pang Qian gave him his space, to let him take in all the changes to the city in the long time that he'd been gone.

Along the way, there were a lot of road blocks. Gu Mingxi said, "They're building a subway here, right? I saw in the news that E City was building a subway."

"Mm, the first line will open next year. There's a stop next to my house too."



Pang Qian smiled. "Where did you see the news?"

"E City News Online, and also Baixing forums." (Note: Baixing is basically like Craigslist.)

As the car passed by the site where the metals factory used to exist, Gu Mingxi looked out the window at the unfamiliar square. He asked, "What's this place called?"

"New Century Square," Pang Qian replied. "Hey, see that brown building? That's where the compound used to be."

"If they tore down the compound, where does Grandpa Ceng live now?" Gu Mingxi asked.

Pang Qian paused. Then she said, "Grandpa Ceng passed away a long time ago. Before they tore the compound down, he was already gone."

Gu Mingxi's pulled his eyes back from the window. He thought for a moment, and then asked, "I nearly forgot. If Grandpa Cai were still alive, he'd be more than 80 years old."

Pang Qian nodded. "Yeah, we're already all grown up."

The heavy machinery factory hadn't been demolished yet. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi arrived at Shark's house.

Shark had already gotten married with Xiao Le, and they had a (more than) 2 year old daughter. They came back from Shanghai for New Year's. The family of three lived together with Shark's mother. The second floor of the house was still empty, which was great for Gu Mingxi to stay in.

When Pang Qian saw Shark, she was really angry. A few years ago, she'd gone to find Shark in Pudong a few times. Each time, she'd asked if he'd heard anything about Gu Mingxi, but Shark swore to god that he hadn't had any contact with Gu Mingxi. He said he hadn't seen him in the past few years.

Pang Qian clenched her teeth. "Shark, you're really too much! You saw that I was looking for him all these years! Didn't you ever feel guilty?! You couldn't tell him that I'd been waiting for him all that time?!"

Shark quickly apologized. "I'm sorry, sorry. Little Crab, it's really not that I



didn't tell him. I worried for him too. It was that blockhead Xiao Gu who didn't get it straight. Go ask him. I tried persuading him for years!"

Gu Mingxi smiled at the side, which made Pang Qian even more angry. She pinched at his waist, "You're still smiling?!"

"Oh!" He couldn't help calling out. Shark's daughter, Tian Tian, ran over at them and started hitting Pang Qian's legs with her little hands. "Bad guy! Bad!"

"Hey! So even this little girl is your fan?" Pang Qian picked up Tian Tian. The little plump girl glared at her. Pang Qian said, "Little Plump Girl, why are you calling me a bad guy?"

"You hit Uncle!" Tian Tian twisted around with all her strength in Pang Qian's arms. She pat Gu Mingxi's face with her little hands and like a child, she said, "Uncle, does it hurt?"

Gu Mingxi smiled and kissed Tian Tian's forehead. He said, "It doesn't hurt. Tian Tian's a good girl."

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had lunch at Shark's place. Afterwards, she carried his luggage into the guest room. She helped him change out the bed sheets for a clean pair, and as she was about to help him unpack his things, Gu Mingxi stopped her.

"I can take care of it. Didn't you say you had to head back to work in the afternoon? Hurry and go. I've already held up your entire morning."

Pang Qian pouted. "What's there to be so polite about with me? I've been a bit busy these few days, so I won't be able to spend time with you. But we can get together over the weekend, okay?"

Gu Mingxi smiled and nodded.

Pang Qian sat down beside him and asked, "When are you coming over to my house for a meal? I told my parents that you were back and my dad called you over for a meal."

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, and then said, "How about tomorrow night? I haven't seen them in a long time, and Uncle and Auntie took care of me a lot. I feel pretty bad not having kept in touch all these years."



“So you know that too, huh.” Pang Qian hugged him. “Then it’s settled. Tomorrow night. I’ll get off work a little earlier to pick you up. I’ll probably have to work overtime tonight, so we won’t get to see each other. I’ll call you when I get home.”

Gu Mingxi asked, “Do you work overtime often?”

“Yeah. And especially at the end of the year, everyone’s really busy.” Pang Qian smiled at him. “Don’t worry, I won’t work too late. I’ll be home by 10 or 11 at the latest.”

Gu Mingxi frowned. “10 or 11 isn’t late?”

“Aiya, in our line of work, it’s pretty common to work all night too. One time, I didn’t go home for three days and worked at the office until the sky was dark. When I got sleepy, I’d take a nap on the sofa for a few hours, and then get back to work when I woke up.”

Gu Mingxi felt very distressed about it. “How can your body handle that? Pang Pang, it’s too tough like this.”

“That’s what work is like.” Pang Qian reached out and ruffled his hair, and then she touched his forehead. “I’m sure that when you have to get a book out, you stay up all night too.”

Gu Mingxi spoke firmly, “I’ve never worked through the night before.”

“Okay, I’ll watch out for my health.” Pang Qian checked her watch. “It’s already past 1 o’clock, I have to get going. I’ll call you at night. Bye.”

She kissed him on the lips and then grabbed her bag and left.

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Gu Mingxi stayed at Shark’s house. He hadn’t met with Shark in a long time, so they spent the rest of the day chatting. In the evening, Clam brought his girlfriend over. He’d already gotten his college diploma and was working at a Volkswagen dealership. Because of his baby face and sweet talk, the customers were happy and business was taken care of quickly.

When Clam saw Gu Mingxi, he was extremely excited. He pointed to Gu Mingxi to show his girlfriend. “Do you know who this is? He’s the extremely popular...”



Shark smacked him on the back of his head, and Clam quickly swallowed the rest of his words. His girlfriend asked curiously, “Extremely popular what?”

“Uh... An internet celebrity.”

“Ah?”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “Ignore his nonsense. I’m just a primary school teacher who occasionally posts drawings online.”

Clam’s girlfriend asked, “What’s your internet handle?”

“I’m sorry, I haven’t revealed myself to the public yet,” Gu Mingxi said. “I’m Gu Mingxi, and you can call me Xiao Gu. In this place, I’m just Shark and Clam’s good friend, nothing more.”

Because they hadn’t seen each other in a long time, everyone drank a bit more than usual at dinner. Clam drunkenly called Oyster, who’d already gone back to his hometown to live. He’d opened his own barbecue place. When he heard Gu Mingxi’s voice over the phone, he was suddenly really moved and started crying. “Xiao Gu! It’s really you!”

Gu Mingxi felt extremely touched. He realized that in all these years, there were more than just a few people who’d been thinking of him.

Oyster said, “When are you and Little Crab getting married? Give me a call then and I’ll definitely be there. Pearl always kept saying she wondered what ended up happening between Xiao Gu and Little Crab.”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “It’s a bit too early to talk about that. Pang Qian and I just... We’ve just been together for a little while now.”

Listening at his side, Clam got really excited. In a loud voice, he called out, “Xiao Gu, Xiao Gu! Did you eat up Crab?” (Note: Literally ‘eat up and wipe clean’)

Gu Mingxi’s face was already red from drinking, but it started burning even more now.

Shark scolded Clam, “Your head’s full of dirty thoughts! You think Xiao Gu’s you?!”

Clam complained, “Xiao Gu’s already 27 years old! Can this be considered dirty thoughts?! If a guy holds himself back for too long, something bad will happen!



Hey, Xiao Gu, you're not still a virgin are you?"

Xiao Le was so embarrassed that she got up from her seat. Clam's girlfriend couldn't stand to hear him keep talking, so she grabbed at his ear. "Shut up! You really drank too much!"

Gu Mingxi's face was so red you could cook on it. He lowered his head and drank more beer through his straw."

It wasn't until 11 o'clock that Pang Qian's call came. She'd just arrived home, and she sounded tired. Gu Mingxi told her about his dinner with Shark and Clam. As Pang Qian listened, she woke up a bit. "Aiya, you guys are terrible. You're playing around while I have to work overtime? I don't care, next time, tell Shark to invite Clam over again."

Gu Mingxi laughed, "No problem."

"Is Clam getting along well now?"

Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian about Clam, and she said, "Who'd have thought. If I knew, I'd have bought my car from him. I might've even gotten a discount."

As she spoke, she yawned. Gu Mingxi said, "Pang Pang, you're tired. Get to sleep."

"But I want to talk with you."

"Aren't we meeting up tomorrow? Hurry and wash up, and then go to sleep early. You still have to go to work tomorrow."

Pang Qian rolled onto her bed with her phone in hand. "Okay, I'll go wash up then. You sleep early too."

"Mm, goodnight."

"Goodnight." She kissed at her phone. "Gu Mingxi, see you tomorrow."

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The next day, Pang Qian got off work and quickly headed to Shark's place to pick up Gu Mingxi.

Shark helped Gu Mingxi bring a bunch of things to Pang Qian's car. Pang Qian stared a bit, and then asked, "What's this? What's all this for?"



Shark laughed out loud. “The kid’s going to see his wife’s parents. He had me go along with him to buy some gifts during the day.”

Pang Qian looked at the bags carefully. Two bottles of wine, two packs of smokes, two cases of health products, a gift box of fruit, and even a box of jewelry. She looked at Gu Mingxi’s bashful expression and complained, “Why did you buy so much stuff? It’s so expensive!”

“I should do it.” Gu Mingxi smiled. “I’m just worried that you won’t be able to carry it all up, and we’ll have to ask Uncle to help.”

Seeing how apprehensive he looked, Pang Qian couldn’t say anything else. She closed the car door and giggled. “I’m taking the guy I like to meet my parents. Gu Mingxi, are you nervous?”

“No.” He turned his head away, reluctant to admit it.

Pang Qian kept giggling as she closed her mouth.

The car headed toward the Prosperous North neighborhood and then parked the car. She carried out all the bags of things from the car. Gu Mingxi looked around at the unfamiliar area. There were six or seven tall buildings around a park. The park had a pond in it, which was surrounded by evergreens. There was also a children’s playground and public exercise area.

“What do you think of the place?” Pang Qian asked him.

Gu Mingxi looked around and nodded. “Not bad.”

“Compared to the Compound?”

Gu Mingxi looked over at her and laughed as he shook his head. “Can’t be compared.”

Pang Qian also laughed and said, “I think so too, can’t be compared.”

When they took the elevator up, Pang Qian saw Gu Mingxi’s reflection in the mirror.

He was wearing a light yellow down jacket, one of the things Pang Qian had bought for him. The bright color gave off a warm feeling. It’s just that yellow would make a pale person look more pale, and it also made a tan person look darker.



Gu Mingxi examined himself in the mirror. He turned his neck and moved his shoulders. And then he saw the girl beside him faintly smile. (Note: Literally 'smile but not smile')

He shrugged, tilted his head and smiled at her. "I'm really tan right now, so yellow doesn't look good on me."

Pang Qian shook her head. "No, I think you look really handsome."

"Really?"

"Of course." She tilted her head and laughed as she looked at him. "Didn't anyone ever tell you that you were First High's school hunk?"

The corners of Gu Mingxi's lips curved up. "Wasn't that Xie Yi?"

"Everyone said you were more handsome than Xie Yi. Didn't you know?"

"Everyone said..." Gu Mingxi looked at her with shining eyes. "So what did you think?"

"I..." Pang Qian smiled wickedly. "Seeing you all the time as I grew up, I grew so tired of it. At the time, I kept arguing with Li Xiaoyan. She said you were handsome, but I said Xie Yi was handsome."

Gu Mingxi's face gave her a dirty look. Pang Qian laughed as she watched him. Then she said, "But when I couldn't find you, I realized that you were better looking than everyone else. Even when you came to Shanghai all sloppy looking, I still felt that you were the best looking."

"..."

"To be honest, I saw a lot of handsome guys after that." Pang Qian spoke slower. "Of my clients and friends, there are some who are mixed and Caucasian. Golden hair, blue eyes, tall, with great qualities – they were really handsome. Even Xie Yi wouldn't be able to compare. And there were a few colleagues at work who were also extremely handsome. For example, there were a ton of girls who had the hots for my team leader. But so what?"

The elevator dinged as it arrived on the 17th floor. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stepped out, and stood in front of Apt. 1702. She turned to Gu Mingxi and said, "Gu Mingxi, no matter how handsome those guys were, in my eyes, none of



them could compare to you.”

Then she used her foot to knock on the door. Gu Mingxi had been speaking with her the whole time, but now, he was very nervous. The door opened and Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua stood together there.

The feeling of home and family gushed out the door. A warm, brightly lit living room. The rumbling of the exhaust hood on in the kitchen. And the aroma of a delicious meal floating in the air...

Gu Mingxi looked at the middle aged couple in front of him. They were already more than 50 years old. Their hair was greying, their stomachs fat, with more wrinkles on their face, and their stature even seemed to have shrunk.

He still remembered the younger Pang Shuisheng, thick black hair and a strong body. He helped him alter his bike. He had a custom desk made for him. In primary school, when it rained, Pang Shuisheng would ride over on his large bike and take the two kids home.

Gu Mingxi sat in front of him, covered with Pang Shuisheng’s raincoat so he wouldn’t get wet. And Pang Qian sat behind him and would get drenched every time.

Gu Mingxi once brought up changing seats, but before Pang Shuisheng could answer, the dripping wet Pang Qian called out, “No! You can’t hold on, so if you sit on the back, you’ll probably fall off!”

...

That was really a very long time ago. A smile appeared on Gu Mingxi’s face, no longer nervous. In a quiet voice, he said, “Uncle, Auntie.”

– My Mister Ostrich –



## Chapter 96 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 96 (Part 2) Unexpected Surprise

*Gu Mingxi, can you say it in a way that I can understand?*

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Pang Shuisheng already took a step forward. Just like the last time they'd met several years ago, he gave Gu Mingxi a great big hug. Jin Aihua stood by Pang Qian's side and looked over Gu Mingxi. Although she'd once been very dissatisfied with him, seeing him now, she couldn't stop the tears from flowing out of her eyes.

Pang Shuisheng released Gu Mingxi and looked up at him. "Mingxi's really grown up. Ah... How can we not have gotten old."

"It's cold out there, hurry inside." With tears in her eyes, Jin Aihua complained, "Mingxi ah, why have you gotten so tan? You looked so nice before, clean and bright."

Pang Qian laughed. "Mom, don't you love watching 'Young Justice Bao?' You always said that a guy who was a bit tan had more character."

"Be quiet!" Jin Aihua glared at her. Then she spoke to Gu Mingxi, "It's nothing. Hainan is very sunny, so it's easy to tan there. When you come back and cover up a bit, you'll get white again."

They hugged Gu Mingxi and entered the house. Pang Qian let out a sigh of relief inside. She was most worried about Jin Aihua's attitude toward Gu Mingxi. But, even though she couldn't compare to her father's enthusiasm, it seemed like her mother was doing a decent job.

After Pang Qian returned from Hainan, Jin Aihua kept nagging that she wouldn't be able to accept Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi dating. Pang Qian thought it over and then let Jin Aihua read 'My Miss Crab.'



When Jin Aihua finished reading it, she sat under her covers and cried. Pang Shuisheng handed her some napkins and said, “Mingxi’s a good kid. He’s always treated our Qian Qian well over the years. Although his qualifications aren’t amazing right now, but I’ve always believed that his future will be great. I’m declaring my position now. Whoever it is that Qian Qian says she likes, I’ll definitely support them all the way.”

Jin Aihua had watched Gu Mingxi grow up, and she had been good friends with Li Han. Now she felt that Gu Mingxi had had it rough in the past years. But to happily hand her daughter to him was really a hurdle she couldn’t get over.

She cried as she said, “Our Qian Qian has such good qualifications right now. She’s so pretty when she dresses up, her work is going well, and her salary is high. She could get any boyfriend she wanted! That Xiao Yu, his qualifications are so good! No matter how I see it, he’s great. How is it that he can’t win against Mingxi?”

Pang Shuisheng laughed. “Do you think that in Qian Qian’s eyes there’s anyone who can win against Mingxi? If there really were, she wouldn’t have been single for so many years.”

Jin Aihua didn’t say anything.

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Before coming over for dinner, Pang Qian had warned her mother, and she’d clearly expressed her wish to be together with Gu Mingxi. She pleaded with Jin Aihua, saying that Gu Mingxi had been alone all these years and he’d suffered a lot. He was coming back for (Chinese) New Year’s. Even if Jin Aihua couldn’t accept it in the beginning, would she please at least treat him well and not humiliate him.

“Mom, just think of it as giving Auntie Li Han some face, okay?” Pang Qian asked her mother. Jin Aihua looked displeased the whole time, but she didn’t say anything.

Unlike Jin Aihua, Pang Shuisheng was very happy. He’d prepared a table of food and pulled Gu Mingxi over to drink. Jin Aihua didn’t say much, until Pang Qian mentioned that Gu Mingxi had bought a 60 sqm house in Sanya. Then her eyes shined and she started speaking excitedly.



Jin Aihua asked Gu Mingxi, “Mingxi, Qian Qian told me that you were going to move back to E City. What are you going to do with the house over there then?”

Gu Mingxi glanced at Pang Qian, and then told Jin Aihua, “I was going to sell it, but Pang Qian said she really liked it and that we could stay there when we visited Sanya. So for now, I don’t plan on selling it.”

Jin Aihua said, “If you don’t sell your house, then where are you going to live in the future? Are you going to rent a place?”

Before Gu Mingxi could respond, Pang Qian stepped in. “Mom, we’ll both earn the money for a house. You don’t have to worry about it. Even if we can’t buy a big house, we shouldn’t have a problem buying a smaller apartment.”

Gu Mingxi raised his eyes to look at her. Jin Aihua said, “Real estate prices are really high right now. You’re both going to earn money? How long is that going to take?! If you ask me, Mingxi should sell the house in Sanya. Can’t you get a more than a million back for it?”

Pang Qian picked up a few pieces of meat and placed it into Gu Mingxi’s bowl. She said, “Mom, I really like that house. It’s got a seaside view! You can’t really buy it anymore, so I’m not going to let him sell it.”

Pang Shuisheng also spoke up. “Mingxi and Qian Qian will take care of their own matters. Don’t butt in.”

Jin Aihua glared at him. “How am I butting in? Aren’t I... Aren’t I just considering it for them?! Real estate is really expensive in E City right now. We bought this place for 7,000 per sqm, and now it’s risen up to 20 thousand per sqm. A house would cost more than 2 million dollars! Your colleagues who opted for the replacement property all regretted it! If Mingxi plans to move back here, whether its for work or marriage, he still has to consider a house! I’m going to say this now. I definitely won’t agree for Qian Qian to marry someone who doesn’t have a house.”

Pang Qian was speechless. “Mom...”

Pang Shuisheng quickly added some more food to Gu Mingxi’s bowl. “Mingxi, eat some more, eat. Let’s not talk about this anymore. You and Qian Qian are both still young, and you’ve just stepping into the professional world. Houses,



cars, and money – you'll have it all later. There's no rush, no rush."

Gu Mingxi listened to their lively conversation and silently smiled. He lowered his head and ate.

After dinner, Pang Qian pulled Gu Mingxi to her room to talk, and she was a bit depressed.

Pang Qian knew that her mother's words weren't pretty, but they were realistic. Pang Qian had been working for four years now and she had some savings. If they wanted to buy a small apartment, they would have to clench their teeth, but it was possible to pay the downpayment. In the beginning, Gu Mingxi wouldn't have a job in E City, and it wasn't known how much money he'd make from publishing illustrated books. It wasn't that Pang Qian couldn't take on the responsibility and pay the entire downpayment, but she felt it would give Gu Mingxi a lot of pressure.

Regarding this problem, Pang Qian couldn't come up with any solutions presently. She didn't want to touch Gu Mingxi's house in Sanya. It was something that he'd worked really hard to get. They couldn't just sell it off like that.

Pang Qian felt a bit unsettled. Gu Mingxi had just returned, and during his first meal with her parents, he was faced with such a realistic and cruel problem. But Pang Qian knew it wasn't something they could hide from. She studied finance, and her work was full of concrete data. Her work was rather dull and based on reason. After a few years, she couldn't avoid being more savvy, slick, and practical.

They'd already gotten rid of the innocence and inexperience of their student days, and this made Pang Qian feel extremely sad.

Gu Mingxi saw that Pang Qian had something on her mind, so he said to her, "Pang Pang."

"Ah?" Pang Qian hugged her stuffed animal and glanced over at him. "What is it?"

Gu Mingxi moved closer to her side and said, "It's nothing really. I just wanted to tell you, don't worry."



“...” Pang Qian knew that she couldn’t hide it from him, so she just pursed her lips. “Gu Mingxi, those adults are really annoying. To be honest, I have a decent amount of savings from the past year. As more time passes, that amount will grow. It’s okay if we can’t buy a house right away. After we work for a few more years, we’ll have everything we want. Why don’t they understand that.”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “Actually, I think what Auntie said makes a lot of sense. If I’m going to move back here, having a house is definitely very important. What mother (in-law) would like a son-in-law who has nothing? Your mom’s just worried that you’ll have to suffer.”

Hearing him say ‘son-in-law’ and ‘mother-in-law,’ Pang Qian became happy again. “Gu Mingxi, who’s son-in-law are you? My parents didn’t say anything about that.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her. “Didn’t say anything? But from what I can see, their daughter is in a bit of a rush.”

“Ugh! Who’s in a rush?!”

She hit him with her stuffed animal. Gu Mingxi laughed as he dodged, and then Pang Qian just reached over to grab him. She put her hands on his shoulders, a place she was already very familiar with these days. She caressed him across his sweater and said lightly, “Gu Mingxi, don’t think about it too much. Really. We’re still young, and I’m not at all in a rush.”

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There was still more than a week before New Year’s. Pang Qian really wanted to spend time with Gu Mingxi, but she couldn’t help it that work was so busy. In the end, she just let go of her hopes. She told Gu Mingxi that she’d pay him back for all the time she’s not spending with him now, over New Year’s. Until then, she would focus on working hard and ask Shark to take care of (or watch out for) Gu Mingxi.

She worked overtime nearly every day, and she even took a two day business trip to Hong Kong. When she had a bit of free time, she called Gu Mingxi and asked what he was doing. He’d say that he was at Shark’s place, watching TV or online, and he didn’t really go out.

But Pang Qian kept feeling that Gu Mingxi’s tone was a bit strange. Sometimes



she would hear sounds from outside, and when she asked him where he was, he said he was taking a walk nearby the heavy machinery factory. Pang Qian knew that Gu Mingxi was hiding something from her.

Pang Qian's suspicions came from the longtime understanding that she'd gained growing up with Gu Mingxi. When they were in school, even if she were more boorish, she'd still be able to understand what he was feeling. Even if his face looked normal, Pang Qian would know when there was something on his mind.

So when Pang Qian had some time off, she pressed Gu Mingxi for answers.

"What have you been doing lately? You're always going out, so where do you go?" she asked anxiously. "Don't try to lie to me. I know that there's something on your mind! Gu Mingxi, what are you hiding from me this time?!"

Gu Mingxi couldn't say anything. He was originally not going to admit it, but seeing how red Pang Qian's eyes had gotten, his heart immediately softened.

"Okay, okay, I was wrong. Pang Pang, don't cry," he comforted her gently. Pang Qian said, "Oh! So you really are hiding something from me! Hurry and spill! What have you been up to recently?"

Gu Mingxi bit his lip and looked at her. Two round eyes, black like ink. He thought for a moment and then said with determination, "Pang Pang, let me take you somewhere."

He actually brought her to the Prosperous North neighborhood. Pang Qian didn't get it. Wasn't this her home?

Then, Gu Mingxi brought Pang Qian inside a real estate agency. He found one of the brokers and said, "Xiao Zhao, can you take me to the house we went to the other day? I want to let my girlfriend see whether she likes it or not."

Pang Qian was dumbfounded.

That house wasn't in the same building as the Pang house, but it was pretty nearby. The place was on the 22nd floor, 138 sqm. The owner was in a rush to sell it, so the price was cheaper than other houses of the same size. But it still wasn't cheap at 2.7 million.



It had three bedrooms and was decorated very simply. At a glance, it was obvious that it was the kind of place that got rented out. The direction, size, lighting, and price were all very good. It looked a lot bigger than the 109 sqm Pang house, and there was also an additional 8 sqm terrace.

Pang Qian looked around the place with Gu Mingxi, a bit dim-witted and completely unaware of his intent. Xiao Zhao carefully explained to her the good points about the house, and even said that now was the time to buy.

“Buying a house in the middle of the city for under 20k per sqm is a really difficult thing. There are a lot of people interested in the house, but since it’s nearly New Year’s, everyone wants to wait a bit. But in my opinion, if you really like it, it’s best to make a move first.”

Pang Qian, “...”

Gu Mingxi asked her, “Pang Pang, do you like it?”

Pang Qian’s eyes widened. “Like what?”

“This house.”

“It’s 2.7 million.” Pang Qian laughed, then she asked Xiao Zhao, “Is this available for both rental and purchase?”

Xiao Zhao shook his head, “No, it’s not available for rental. The owner really wants to sell it.”

Pang Qian looked at Gu Mingxi, “Gu Mingxi, what does this mean? I don’t understand.”

Gu Mingxi laughed and then said, “Recently, I’ve been looking at houses within a 5 km radius of your house. In the end, I still felt that living in the same neighborhood as your parents would be best. Because...”

He smiled shyly. “I was thinking that later on, for example, when we have a kid or if your parents got sick, living close by would be helpful.”

Pang Qian felt like she was listening to scripture.

“Gu Mingxi, can you say it in a way that I can understand?” She couldn’t understand. “It’s 2.7 million. Are you planning to sell your place in Sanya and put a down payment on this house?”



Gu Mingxi shook his head, a smile slowly coming onto his face. “Pang Pang, I never told you, but before coming to E City, I sold the rights to my two illustrated books for film adaptations. One of them...” He glanced at Xiao Zhao and then quickly whispered to Pang Qian, “Our story. A drama, film, and novel adaptation, all together for 1.1 million. And there’s also the book I put out before that, and the rights went for 400 thousand. So the down payment won’t be a problem.”

He straightened up and looked at the frozen girl in front of him. He said, “There’s also another book that we’re in talks for now. My new book will hit shelves in the summer, and Qi’s been discussing the story with a production company. Basically, we’ll sign the contract at the start and give up the rights from the beginning.”

Pang Qian: ==

Gu Mingxi bit her ear again. “Pang Pang, what I’m trying to say is, if you like this house, let’s buy it. As for the money... Don’t worry about it, I’ll earn it to bring home.”

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# Chapter 97 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 97 (Part 1) Happy New Year

*If I can't trust you, then I probably shouldn't trust myself either.*

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At Gu Mingxi's suggestion, Pang Qian called Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua to take a look at the house.

Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua were both taken off guard, as Pang Qian had been. After they looked around the house in confusion, Gu Mingxi told them that he wanted to buy this house. The two of them looked at him in surprise.

Pang Shuisheng pulled Jin Aihua over to the side and quietly chided her. "Look at you. You mentioned houses, so now Gu Mingxi must want to sell his house in Sanya to put a down payment on this place. This house costs nearly 3 million. Think about how burdensome the mortgage for it will be!"

Jin Aihua didn't feel very good either. She said guiltily, "I was just saying it. I didn't tell him to immediately buy a house, and I definitely didn't tell him to buy such a big house. He could buy something different or smaller too."

"You shouldn't have mentioned houses at all!" Pang Shuisheng thought for a moment, and then he said, "This won't do. Mingxi hasn't even moved back here yet. I have to convince him that there's no hurry to buy a house. Getting work is more important."

There were a few days left before New Year's. Pang Qian's family of three plus Gu Mingxi had a family meeting.

They had two things they needed to discuss. One, should they buy this house in the Prosperous North district?

Gu Mingxi wanted to buy it and Pang Shuisheng was against it. Jin Aihua didn't dare to add her opinion, and just said, "Didn't we say that Mingxi and Qian Qian



should decide their own matters. I'm not butting in." Pang Shuisheng got very angry and glared at her.

He told his daughter, "Qian Qian, convince Mingxi. Don't buy this house. There's no rush to buy one. As parents, we don't have any grand requests. Look, when your mom and I married, we didn't have a house. Then we got a small three bedroom house, and didn't we live well there for more than 20 years? You can also start out in a small place."

Pang Shuisheng originally thought that Pang Qian would support him, because more than anyone else, she wouldn't want to put pressure on Gu Mingxi. He hadn't expected that Pang Qian's expression would be one of deep consideration.

After the past few years, Pang Qian's knowledge on real estate had increased. She'd been making money the whole time, and she wanted to buy a house in the middle of the city. Although housing prices had increased a lot from normal, and new residences in the suburbs cost more than 10k per sqm, but Pang Qian felt that the prices would only keep rising. The financial news had been talking about how the federal price regulation on housing would be introducing credit limits and restriction policies, and that might cause the prices to fall. But Pang Qian still believed that this wouldn't really affect housing prices for property in the heart of the city. Rather, prices would rise, not fall.

If she were only considering for herself, she would definitely choose a smaller house. But she had to include Gu Mingxi in her future plans. Knowing that Gu Mingxi's plans already included children, Pang Qian's heart softened. She knew that what Gu Mingxi wanted was a family.

She sat down next to Gu Mingxi, resting her hand on his thigh. She asked, "Are you sure there are no problems with the funds?"

Gu Mingxi said, "No, there are no problems. The money's already in my account. They just deducted the tax. Adding in my savings, I can make the 1.3 million down payment."

Pang Qian thought for a moment, and then said, "Then let's buy it."

Pang Shuisheng cried out in surprise, "Qian Qian!"



Pang Qian smiled. “Dad, don’t worry. I have some savings too. If we add that onto the initial payment, the mortgage won’t be as high either.”

Now that the first topic was more or less resolved, Jin Aihua felt delighted. The next topic of discussion— Who’s name would the house be under?

Pang Qian and Pang Shuisheng both felt that it should be Gu Mingxi’s name. After they got married, they would add Pang Qian’s name to.

But Gu Mingxi said, “Write Pang Pang’s name.”

Pang Qian immediately refused. “I’m not adding much money to it! At most, 30 or 40 thousand. It’s not because I want my name on the deed!”

Jin Aihua couldn’t help quipping. “30 or 40 thousand isn’t a small amount. Qian Qian, the two of you will definitely be responsible for it together in the future. Both of your names should be on it.”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. “No, Auntie, I don’t mean to add both of our names on it. What I mean is to put it in Pang Qian’s name only.”

Pang Qian cried out, “Gu Mingxi, are you crazy?!”

Pang Shuisheng was also shaking his head. “No, no, that won’t do!”

Even Jin Aihua didn’t take it lightly. “Mingxi ah, you’re putting down more than a million dollars. How can you only write Pang Qian’s name on it?”

Gu Mingxi thought it was really interesting. He smiled and said, “Uncle, Auntie, isn’t your trust in Pang Qian too little?”

Pang Shuisheng said, “It’s not that we don’t trust Pang Qian, but... We’ve seen too many things like this before. For a bit of money or a house, couples, siblings, and parents can all become enemies. Although Qian Qian is our daughter, we look at you as our son too. If you put out that much money for the house, of course your name has to go on it. As for Qian Qian, it’s too early for you two to discuss marriage. After everything is official later on, it won’t be too late to add Pang Qian’s name to the house. In any case, I won’t agree to putting Qian Qian’s name onto it. If your mother was still here, she definitely wouldn’t agree to it either.”

Gu Mingxi felt very touched. The two people in front of him were clearly Pang



Qian's parents, but they were genuinely concerned and considering things for him. He smiled and then explained his thoughts. "I really trust Pang Pang. Really. Uncle, I really trust her."

He turned to glance at Pang Qian. Her hand was still resting on his thigh. Gu Mingxi continued. "Because of my situation, it will be harder to apply for bank loans. When I bought my house in Sanya, I didn't have a proof of stable income, and I was disabled. The bank wouldn't help me with the mortgage at all, until my teacher acted as my guarantor. They acted so harshly at the time when I was asking for a 500 thousand loan. This time, the loan will be more than 1 million, and you can imagine what will happen. Writing Pang Qian's name is different though. She has a good job with high income, and accumulated funds, so the interest rate will be lower. That's why I think that it's the most convenient and reasonable method to just her name on it."

His words made Pang Qian's family unable to retort. Pang Shuisheng had also taken out a loan when he bought his house, so he knew a bit about it. Pang Qian worked in the financial sector, so of course she understood very well. For someone with the work history and physical condition that Gu Mingxi had, it would be impossible to get a loan for 1 million dollars.

But she really couldn't 'bully' him this way. She said, "No, I still don't agree to it."

Gu Mingxi jumped in. "Pang Pang, don't let your emotions cloud your thinking. After we finish, we have to quickly sign the contract."

Pang Qian lowered her head and pouted, her hand drawing on his leg over and over. Then she lifted her head to look at her. She said, "Gu Mingxi, how about we get married."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Of course Gu Mingxi didn't agree to Pang Qian's suggestion to get married. Who got married after only dating for a month? Pang Qian scoffed. "A month? Why do I feel like we've been dating for the past 20 years?"

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The two of them sat inside Pang Qian's room, where the heater kept them warm. Pang Qian held a large cup of ice cream and alternated between eating a



spoon and feeding Gu Mingxi a spoon.

Gu Mingxi smiled. “20 years? Why don’t I remember that? From what I recall, you liked Xie Yi for quite a few years. You even used me to practice confessing to him. What does that count as? Does it count as an affair then?”

“You want to die?! Gu Mingxi, I can’t stand you sometimes! Ugh!” Hearing Gu Mingxi bring up Xie Yi, Pang Qian felt indignant and dropped the ice cream onto him.

He lied on the bed and Pang Qian hit him with a pillow. “Stop bringing up Xie Yi!”

Gu Mingxi laughed. After Pang Qian had enough, she lied down on the bed next to him. After she let out a sigh, she turned to the side and supported herself up with her arm as she looked at him.

Gu Mingxi turned his head to look at her with his gentle eyes. Pang Qian’s lips curved up and she said, “You told me back then that you liked a girl in your drawing class. You told me that you liked her, that you really liked her. Do you remember?”

Gu Mingxi blinked. “Ah...”

She reached over to touch his face, her fingers running along her jawline, down to his chin. Her fingers brushed over the stubble there, and she felt it was very scratchy and extremely interesting.

“After I went to Z City and couldn’t find you, I wondered if you might have contacted that girl. So I asked my dad to go to where you took drawing lessons to see if he could find the teacher.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“But your teacher said that for the past few years, you’d been studying drawing with two boys, and there was no girl working with you guys.” Pang Qian’s voice lowered. “At the time, I kept thinking that Gu Mingxi was really silly. How could he be so silly.”

He looked at her with his dark eyes, biting on his lips, not saying anything.

Pang Qian smiled. “But then later on, I started to feel more and more that the



real fool was me.”

When she finished speaking, she lowered her head and kissed him. He finally closed his eyes and enjoyed her delicious lips. He felt that they were ten million times more delicious than ice cream.

After the two of them kissed for awhile, Gu Mingxi said, “Pang Pang, promise me that you’ll put your name down on the house.”

Pang Qian froze for a moment. Gu Mingxi smiled slightly and said, “It’s going to be our house. What’s yours is mine, what’s mine is yours. I want it to be our house in the future. If you don’t agree, I can’ buy it on my own.”

Pang Qian still wasn’t sure. Gu Mingxi suddenly sat up and bent over to kiss Pang Qian’s forehead. He said, “Unless, you’re going to cheat me?”

Pang Qian frowned and stared at him. “Who knows if one day I’ll just sell the house and run away with the money. Then what will you do?”

“Then we’ll just take it as a gift I sent to you.” He nudged her cheek with his own. “My mom’s no longer here. Pang Pang, right now, you’re the person I’m closest to in this world. Everything that belongs to me is yours. If I can’t trust you, then I probably shouldn’t trust myself either.”

His words shook Pang Qian’s heart. She thought, yes, why was she so adamantly against it? Gu Mingxi trusted her the same as he trusted himself, but right now, she wasn’t the same! Was she worried that she would leave him later?

Would she? Would she?!

Of course not!

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Two days before New Year’s, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian went to meet with the house’s owner and sign the contract. The house was in Pang Qian’s name, and just hers. Because it was nearly New Year’s, everyone decided to handle the rest of the formalities after the holiday. Gu Mingxi transferred the first payment to the real estate agency’s account, and like that, the matter of buying a house was settled.



On the eve of the new year, Pang Shuisheng and his three siblings reserved three tables at a restaurant to have dinner with his parents and their families.

Gu Mingxi went with them to the restaurant. He'd been neighbors with Pang Qian since he was young, so her family all recognized him and knew about his family situation. Even after such a long time without seeing him, each one of them treated him very familiarly.

Little Aunt-in-law said, "Mingxi, why have you gotten so tan? But you're still very handsome. A bit of a tan adds to your manliness." (Note: Or more literally, adds to his 'scent of a man'.)

Little Aunt wiped away a tear and said, "Mingxi, you must have suffered all these years. It's good that you're back now."

Grandma Pang had become a bit senile, and sometimes she couldn't recognize people. But very curiously, she called out, "Mingxi! Isn't this Mingxi? Mingxi's come home!"

Grandma Pang had often taken care of Gu Mingxi when he was younger. The day of his incident with the electric transformer, it was Grandpa and Grandma Pang who had been watching the two kids. The day that Gu Mingxi had his arms amputated, Grandma Pang had cried so much that she'd fainted. She felt that it had been her responsibility, that it was her fault for not taking care of this child, that she'd ruined the rest of his life. Afterwards, every time she came over to the Pang house and brought things for her granddaughter, she never forgot to prepare something for Gu Mingxi next door.

Gu Mingxi crouched down to Grandma Pang, who was shedding tears. With his face next to hers, he said, "Grandma, it's me, Mingxi. I'm home."

Grandma Pang patted his head and said, "Good child, good child. This time, don't leave again. I heard Shuisheng say that your mother passed away. Aiya, Ah Han was such a good person. Why did she suffer so much. But you've come back, and that's good. That's good."

Pang Qian walked over to her grandmother's side and said, "Grandma, Gu Mingxi and I are dating now."

Grandma Pang didn't respond, and Grandpa Pang reminded her, "Wife, Qian



Qian said that she and Mingxi are meeting.” (Note: The words he used imply that two people are meeting with the intent of marriage.)

“Meeting? Qian Qian and Mingxi are meeting?” As if waking from a dream, Grandma Pang quickly pulled out a red envelope. “Why didn’t you tell me sooner? I should have prepared a meeting present for Mingxi.” She stuffed a red envelope into Gu Mingxi’s pocket. “Mingxi, I know that you’re a good kid. I’ll leave Qian Qian in your care. Don’t worry.” (Note: The term used here for ‘meeting present’ is for gifts that one gives to a relative or junior when meeting them for the first time. Here, what’s going on is that they’re meeting Gu Mingxi for the first time as part of their own family.)

The food and drinks were served, and the three tables ate and enjoyed their reunion dinner. Other than the young kids present, everyone else had watched Gu Mingxi grow up, so they were very accustomed to his manner of eating.

Pang Qian sat beside Gu Mingxi and helped him put more food in his bowl. She also helped serve him soup and drinks. They knew each other’s tastes, so the food she gave him were all his favorites.

Gu Mingxi had already forgotten when the last time he’d had a proper New Year’s dinner was. For the past years, he’d spent New Year’s in Z City, S City, and then in Sanya.

His first year in Hainan, he declined Shark’s invitation and spent the New Year’s in his Sanya house by himself. At the time, his house had just finished its renovation, and he didn’t have the money to install all the electronic appliances. He didn’t celebrate New Year’s and just made himself a bowl of boiled dumplings. He didn’t take the food out of the kitchen when it was done either. Instead, he stood in front of the stove on his left foot, and raised his right foot to the pot to eat.

The second and third years he spent in Sanya, he had Dou Dou beside him, and the house had a TV. He and Dou Dou would have New Year’s dinner and then watch the celebration programs on TV.

Dou Dou was still young and didn’t really understand the programs, so he would fall asleep pretty quickly. Sitting on the sofa, Gu Mingxi saw the joy and laughter lighting up the TV screen, and he couldn’t help thinking of the people



thousands of miles away from him.

Pang Qian's 4 year old niece, Lin Lin, ran over to Gu Mingxi's side. She looked curiously at him and pulled on his shirt sleeve. "Uncle, where are your arms?"

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "I got sick when I was little and my arms went bad, so the doctor had to take them away."

"Will the doctor return them to you?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head, his eyes very gentle. "No, he won't."

"Then what are you going to do?" Lin Lin thought about it and then said, "Uncle, you can go buy two arms."

Gu Mingxi laughed. "Where do I go to buy them?"

"Taobao!" Lin Lin cried out happily. "Mom says that you can buy anything on Taobao!" (Note: Taobao's like Ebay)

As midnight approached, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian started counting down together.

They were at Shark's house. Shark had a business and was also a bit superstitious. He bought 5000 dollars worth of fireworks and said he wanted to set them off so that the new year would be booming.

When Shark set off the fireworks in front of his house, Pang Qian hid beside Gu Mingxi. She wrapped her arms around his waist and peeked out to look. After all these years, she was still scared of fire, scared of the smell of burning gunpowder, scared of the scent of scorched air. Gu Mingxi knew that this fear came about from the accident when he was 6 years old.

When the bell sounded for midnight, the sky was filled with fireworks, and the air was filled with a deafening sound. Gu Mingxi turned and lowered his head to look at Pang Qian's cheek. The fireworks shimmered across her face. He could see her scared eyes and pursed lips.

Gu Mingxi smiled as the woman beside him held onto him tightly. He rested his chin on her head, and then turned his head down.

"Pang Pang, don't be scared, don't be scared." The fireworks were very loud, but his voice was surprisingly clear. Pang Qian was enchanted by his voice, and



her panicked heart gradually calmed.

He was injured 20 years ago. It was a long time, 20 years. But it was also a very short time, 20 years.

He whispered in her ear, “Pang Pang, Happy New Year.”

“Mm, Gu Mingxi, Happy New Year.”

On the first of the new year, Pang Shuisheng gave Gu Mingxi a thick red envelope and said it was a meeting present. Jin Aihua stood beside him and said, “Don’t bully our Qian Qian, you got it? If you dare to bully her, I won’t forgive you!”

One sentence made everything so very clear. A smile gradually spilled out from Gu Mingxi’s eyes. He turned to look at Pang Qian, who was blocking her face with a pillow, obviously embarrassed. Gu Mingxi quietly said to Pang Shuisheng, “Uncle, don’t worry. I’ll definitely treat Pang Qian well.”

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## Chapter 97 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 97 (Part 2) Happy New Year

*If I can't trust you, then I probably shouldn't trust myself either.*

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Over the Lunar New Year break, Pang Qian was very relaxed and she would laze around with Gu Mingxi every day. On the first day of the new year, she ate at her own home. On the second night, they went to her (maternal) grandparents'. On the third night, they went to her uncle's. On the fourth night, Pang Shusheng and Jin Aihua's old colleagues came over to their house for dinner.

Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Have you contacted your dad all these years?"

He shook his head, "No."

"Then... Are you going to meet up with him now that you've come back?"

Gu Mingxi pondered for a moment, and then he shook his head again. "I don't want to."

Pang Shusheng was popular, so he had quite a few colleagues and friends from the metals company. Some of them hadn't retired yet either. In that case, it wasn't convenient for Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi to stay home. After they ate lunch, Pang Qian dragged Gu Mingxi out for a walk.

They arrived at the New Century Square, which housed a large commercial center, a movie theater, an ice skating rink, a mall, a market, and luxury brand stores. There were also restaurants, tea houses, and coffee shops of all sizes.

Pang Qian dragged Gu Mingxi to a few different male clothing stores. She helped him buy several sets of clothes for winter and even spring. It was all pretty expensive.

After he'd returned to E City, all of Gu Mingxi's clothes were bought by Pang



Qian. Gu Mingxi would say that something was too expensive, even as Pang Qian helped him adjust the collar. She would say, “I’m returning to you all the years we missed out on. I’ll buy all our clothes from now on. All my single colleagues say that I have good taste. Clothes make the man after all. And my boyfriend is so handsome, if he dresses well, that’s just icing on the cake.”

Gu Mingxi curled his lips. “During school, the clothes you wore made people scared to compliment you. A rose red top and a grass green skirt. And you even dared ask me if you looked good... Tsk, tsk.”

“Ugh!” Pang Qian glared at him. “Say that again! Would you believe me if I said I was going to sell the house and run away?”

(Note: There are a lot of instances where Pang Qian will say ‘[you’re so] hateful!’ or ‘[I] hate [you]’ which means that Gu Mingxi is irritating or annoying her. I’m pretty sure I used to translate it literally as ‘Hateful!’ for awhile, but I think recently, I’ve been translating it more as ‘Ugh’ to signify irritation and disdain, because ‘Hateful!’ sounds so stupid... Just to let you know.)

As if it had become her mantra, this sentence would always come out when they quarreled. Gu Mingxi smiled and shook his head. “Go ahead, sell it. If you sell the house, I’ll go back to Sanya to teach, draw, and live in my little house with a view. And then I’ll find another girl...”

“You dare to, you dare to!” She grabbed at his ear, but since they were in public, Gu Mingxi didn’t dare to scream out loud. In a low voice, he said, “It hurts, it hurts...”

Pang Qian released her hand and then helped him rub his ear. Gu Mingxi looked at her, aggrieved. “And your mom even told me not to bully you. You should let her see how her precious daughter is bullying a kid without a mom.”

This person! This person! This person’s face was really getting thicker! Pang Qian was carrying two bags of male clothing, unsure whether to laugh or cry. The two of them stared at each other, and then they both started laughing.

After they finished buying things, they went to a Chamate (Note: A tea place/restaurant, I assume) to eat some things. Pang Qian said she wanted to watch a movie, so the two of them headed down to the movie theater. The theater was decorated festively for New Year’s. There was cheerful music playing



and tons of people. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were discussing what movie to watch when suddenly a commotion started up.

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A woman's sharp and shrill voice sounded, "Cheating scum! Adulterers! I've caught you this time!"

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi couldn't help turning to look. They saw a middle aged woman with curly hair leading a few men and women towards a couple. The man in the couple looked to be more than 40 years old, carrying a few extra pounds, and wearing glasses and a fresh outfit. The woman was about 30 years old with good looks. On this cold day, she was wearing a short skirt with tights and heels.

Things developed very quickly. The middle aged woman had obviously gathered the people with her in advance. Two other men quickly grabbed hold of the man, while three other women gathered around the woman. She wanted to run away, but someone grabbed her arm. How could she escape three other people? The curly haired woman was already standing in front of her. Left and right, she slapped the woman seven or eight times.

The sound was loud and crisp. Pang Qian jumped from the surprise, as she thought about how painful it must have been. The three women had already started to pull at the pretty woman's clothing.

The pretty woman cried out miserably. Crawling on the floor, crying and screaming. (Note: Lack of pronouns makes me unsure which of them is doing what at times.) The man wearing glasses on the side kept calling for the other women to stop. Some passersby were about to try to calm them, when the curly haired woman started wailing.

It was that old, stereotypical story again. A couple married for twenty years struggled together for years, and their family business was finally going well. But then at this time, her husband cheated on her.

Everyone in the crowd sympathized with the curly haired woman. Her eyes were red as she pointed at the man with glasses. "If you want a divorce, that's fine! I'll help you with that! But don't think about touching the house, the car, the company, the stocks, or the savings! You can try to take me to court, but see



if you'll make it to the hearing with your life intact! And our son! I'm telling you now, don't ever think of meeting him again for the rest of your life!"

The man with glasses' face turned ashen. After the curly haired woman finished speaking, she suddenly pulled out a bottle from her bag. She took off the cap and poured it onto the pretty woman, whose hair and clothes got drenched.

No one knew what the liquid was, but then the curly haired woman pulled out a lighter. The pretty woman was terrified as she collapsed to her knees. She knocked her head on the ground and pleaded for her life.

Pang Qian pulled at Gu Mingxi to leave as she reached for her phone to call the police. She was really scared that it had been some sort of gasoline like substance. Then she realized that Gu Mingxi looked very solemn, his feet stuck in place.

The curly haired woman started to laugh as the crowd around started to hide and run. A few people were even recording the scene in front of them.

The curly haired woman tossed away her lighter. Looking down condescendingly at the shaking woman on the ground, she said coldly, "This is water, you won't die. Fang Hui, I remember that you seduced another man before, and not just one. Have some morals, if just for your daughter. She's only 7 years old! Do you think everyone will be as forgiving as me? Haha. Be careful, else you might not know what causes your death one day."

When she finished speaking, she turned and walked away. The ones who had come with her followed suit. The man with the glasses stood there in a daze. He looked at the disgraced woman on the ground and then at the spectator's mocking eyes. He turned and chased after his wife, "Wife, Wife, I was wrong. Wife..."

Now that the lively scene had ended, the crowd dispersed. Only Gu Mingxi still stood there, looking at the woman on the ground.

Her face had swollen already, and there were marks from the fingers that hit her. Her nose and lips were bleeding. Her stockings had been torn to pieces, and her coat had been pulled off long ago. Her sweater was ripped, her bra strap exposed. Her whole body [censored], as she sat on the ground, breathing



heavily.

After a long while, she finally stood up, shaking. All the people passing by glanced over at her. Fang Hui wanted to tidy up her clothes, but she realized that she couldn't. She took off her heels and carried them in her hands as she limped towards the door.

When she walked past him, she looked at him.

Gu Mingxi was wearing a down coat. With the bulging and puffy sleeves stuffed into his pockets, you couldn't tell that he was disabled at a glance.

Fang Hui had just suffered a major shock, her eyes filled with fear and resentment. Her face was extremely pale. She just glanced briefly at Gu Mingxi before walking past him.

Gu Mingxi watched her figure walk off, and he knew that she hadn't recognized him.

Pang Qian pulled at his coat. "What are you looking at? Let's go, let's buy our tickets."

Gu Mingxi turned to her, "What did you want to watch?"

"How about 'My Own Swordsman'? It's supposed to be pretty funny."

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Okay."

When they went to buy their tickets, he turned back once more, but Fang Hui was nowhere to be seen.

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It was evening when Pang Qian was sending Gu Mingxi off. Just then, Gu Guoxiang's call came.

Jin Aihua answered the phone. Gu Guoxiang, "Aihua, this is Guoxiang. I heard that Mingxi came back."

Jin Aihua was cracking melon seeds on the sofa as she asked, "Who's Mingxi?"

"..." Gu Guoxiang's voice was cordial and solemn. "Aihua, don't joke around. My son, Gu Mingxi."

"Haha!" Jin Aihua perked up. "You know that Gu Mingxi is your son? Why are



you looking for him at my house? Your son came back but didn't contact you? Your son, and we have to be responsible for helping you find him?"

Gu Guoxiang held down his temper. "Someone told me that Mingxi was together with Qian Qian at your building. Is it true?"

"Ask the person who saw it," Jin Aihua said coldly. "In any case, I didn't see it. To be honest, I really do want to see Mingxi. To ask him if he's suffered all these years. To ask him how he got through all these years, after his mother passed away, without any arms, all by himself!"

"Aihua..."

"If there's nothing else, I'm hanging up."

"..."

"Oh, by the way, don't you dare come to my house. We don't welcome you as a guest."

When she finished speaking, she mercilessly hung up the phone. The now retired woman wasn't at all scared of Gu Guoxiang. She harrumphed and then turned to Pang Shuisheng sitting beside her. "Don't stare at me. I'm just outraged at the injustice for Ah Han."

Pang Shuisheng wrapped his arm around her shoulders and said, "Who's staring at you? Wife, that was beautiful!"

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 98

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 98 Spring Festival Dinner

*We're here. Who else is already here?*

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The one who told Gu Guoxiang the news (about Gu Mingxi) was obviously not Fang Hui, but rather an employee at the metals company, one of his subordinates, if you will. He originally lived in the Golden Compound, and now he lived at the New Gold Park. Over New Year's, he was having dinner at a restaurant in the New Century Square, when he happened to see Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian walking together.

He'd watched Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian grow up, so he naturally didn't forget their faces. Even after so many years, now that the kids had grown up into a young man and woman, he still recognized them immediately.

When he returned home that night, he considered it for awhile, and then he gave Gu Guoxiang a call.

Gu Mingxi was very surprised at how many relatives Pang Qian had. From the first to the fifth of the new year, they had a get together every day. He obediently followed Pang Qian to each of her relatives' homes, obediently greeted everyone with her and ate, and then obediently received red envelopes.

Gu Mingxi couldn't really understand the rules of Pang Qian's family. Whether it was Jin Aihua's side or Pang Shuisheng's side, a lot of older people all gave him a red envelope, saying it was a first meeting present. When they returned home, Pang Qian pulled the packets out of his pocket and quickly counted the money. Then she recorded this down in a notebook.

"Goodness, my uncle actually gave you 3,000! What's going on here?" Pang Qian shook her head and sighed. "When my cousin brings her boyfriend home,



then it'll be our turn to bleed [out money?]."

After this Spring Festival, Gu Mingxi received 50 thousand dollars from the red envelopes. He asked her curiously, "We both work, so why do we get red envelopes?"

Pang Qian smiled, "Because you're my boyfriend, and it's the first time I'm bringing you back for New Year's. Our family has a custom of giving a first meeting present for the kids' partners. Everyone gives some, though how much depends on their financial situation. In any case, this is something that comes and goes. We'll have to repay it later."

Gu Mingxi said, "But I didn't see you give any red envelopes to the kids."

Pang Qian looked at him with wide eyes. "I'm not married yet. It's enough that my parents give it. After we get married and we have our own family, you won't be able to hide even if you wanted."

"So it's like that. You don't have to give money if you're not married yet?" Gu Mingxi suddenly realized. "I give Dou Dou New Year's money every year."

Pang Qian laughed. "That's different. You're basically acting as his dad."

On the subject of Dou Dou, Gu Mingxi recalled the call Dou Dou had given him for New Year's. The kid told him Happy New Year, and Gu Mingxi asked if he was happy staying with his mom. Dou Dou dropped his voice.

"Mom and Uncle have a son and daughter, though they like their son more." Dou Dou asked Gu Mingxi, "Teacher Gu, when are you returning to Sanya? Can you pick me up on the way?"

Gu Mingxi said, "I'll head back before the end of winter break. Your mom will send you back then."

"Will I still be able to live with you?"

"Of course." Gu Mingxi really couldn't find it in him to say that he would only be staying in Sanya for another half a year. He said, "Dou Dou, be good. I'll bring you a present, okay?"

After he hung up the phone, Gu Mingxi felt a bit sour inside. After two years of knowing each other, he and Dou Dou had already formed a deep emotional ties.



He knew that Dou Dou relied on him, but he also knew that it would be difficult for him to keep raising Dou Dou.

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“Gu Mingxi, what are you thinking about?” Pang Qian’s voice called him back to the present. She looked at him and smiled. “Tomorrow is the sixth (of the New Year), and we have one final dinner party to go. When it’s over, we’ll be free!”

Gu Mingxi forced a laugh. “There’s still one more? When it’s over, your vacation ends too.”

“Is there something you’re unhappy about? Didn’t I spend every day with you?” She snuggled up to him. “We’re having dinner tomorrow at Donghua Hotel. Do you want to walk around there during the day, or do you want to stay at home?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment, then said, “Stay at home. Actually, I like staying with you in this room, just chatting and listening to music. That’s enough.”

“It’s so nice to raise you.” Pang Qian laid down on the bed and wrapped her arms around him. She really liked hugging him, as if the steady flow of warmth from his body could cure the hunger and thirst of her skin.

She nestled her cheek to his shoulder. Gu Mingxi turned his head and kissed her, and then asked, “Which relative are we eating with tomorrow night?”

“Not a relative, but a few friends.” Pang Qian giggled. “They wanted to see you, so I agreed.”

Gu Mingxi was a bit surprised. “Your friends?”

“Mm.”

“Do they know about my condition?”

“They know.”

He didn’t say another word.

Before they left the next day, Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi pick out his clothes. He usually didn’t much care about how he dressed, but that day, he wanted some opinions about it.



A beige, wool vest with black trousers and a black belt. Black shoes and a short, light grey wool coat. His handsome appearance made Pang Qian's heartbeat quicken.

He'd actually never dressed so formally before, because those types of clothes made it inconvenient for him to do things. Usually, Gu Mingxi dressed very leisurely, but because he was meeting Pang Qian's friends, he hoped that he would appear well next to her.

"Gu Mingxi, you're simply too handsome!" Pang Qian helped him with his belt and then neatened his collar. Her eyes were full of love, and then she saw how unusual Gu Mingxi looked. She smiled and asked, "Are you very nervous?"

He shook his head, but he didn't seem very sure of that. Pang Qian smiled and said, "Is it because you're meeting my friends? You don't have to be nervous. They're all very good people."

Gu Mingxi quietly sighed. He said, "Pang Pang, I don't have any arms, after all."

"You asked me before if I felt you were embarrassing." Pang Qian pulled at Gu Mingxi's shirt and lifted her head to look at him. "Gu Mingxi, you said it yourself then, that you didn't think there was anything embarrassing (or disgraceful) about yourself."

"I was young back then. I didn't understand (the world)," he said a bit helplessly. "I'm okay, but I'm meeting your friends today. I don't want them to talk behind your back later after seeing me."

"They won't!" Pang Qian held his face in her hands. "Later on, I'm going to take you to Yang Lu and Sheng Feng's wedding, and you'll meet lots of my college classmates. And I have to take you to our company parties and outings. Our company has a lot of activities! I'm even going to take you to weddings and receptions for my clients. Because you're my boyfriend, and later you'll be my husband, I hope that you can join my social circle and meet my friends. I'm sure that they'll really like you."

Seeing his crinkled brows, she stroked his forehead and said, "Gu Mingxi, you weren't like this before. In the past, you were a lot more confident."



Gu Mingxi's gaze was fixed on her eyes, and gradually, they curved. His lips curved up as well. He said, "Pang Pang, for myself, I'm okay with anything. But now that I'm together with you, I really want to do better. I don't care if people gossip behind my back, I never cared about that. I'm afraid that other people will talk behind your back because of me though. These people are your friends after all. Don't you think that, being together with me, you'll eventually come across this kind of situation? There will definitely be someone who comes to you and says 'Pang Qian, with such good qualifications, how did you find such a boyfriend?' They may not have any ill intentions, but once you hear it, you'll definitely feel bad inside. To be honest, I couldn't think of any way to resolve this. I can't just hide at home and never meet your friends, so... What I wanted to say was that being with me, you'll have to face a lot of these questions and situations in the future. Have you ever thought about it before?"

Pang Qian burst out with a laugh. "Gu Mingxi, be careful or else I might sell your house. What's the point of talking about these trivial things right now? Hurry up, we're going to be late."

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As they rode the elevator down, Gu Mingxi looked at himself in the mirror. Pang Qian tiptoed and helped him tidy his hair. Then she kissed him on the cheek. "Stop looking, you're already handsome enough! If you were to go onto 'If You're the One' (Note: [A dating game show](#)), none of the ladies would turn off their lights for you."

Gu Mingxi laughed. "Would I be that welcome? Then does that mean I lost out ending up with you? Maybe I should go onto 'If You're the One' to try it out for real."

"It's a loss, a big loss. Hurry and go sign up!" Pang Qian laughed. "If you register for it, then I can sell your house and make more than a million dollars!"

Pang Qian brought Gu Mingxi to the Donghua Hotel Restaurant. When they walked up to the private room, they could hear lots of chattering. Gu Mingxi called Pang Qian and asked, "Pang Pang, do I look okay?"

Pang Qian looked him up and down and then gave him a thumbs up. Then she gave him an encouraging look and then pushed open the door to the private



room. She popped her head in and said, “We’re here. Who else is already here?”

Gu Mingxi stood behind her and only heard the cheers that came. Then the door was pulled open and a lot of people ran at him. He looked at them, stunned. Before he could respond, a short haired woman had already come to hug him.

“Gu Mingxi! Ah— It’s really you!” Gu Mingxi lowered his head and saw Jiang Zhiya’s charming face. It was the first time he’d seen her with short hair, so he nearly didn’t recognize her.

Zhou Nanzhong was beside her and pat her on the shoulder. “Hey, hey, Anchor Jiang, don’t you care about Crab? What do you mean by hugging someone else’s boyfriend? Bullying him because he can’t push you away, huh?”

“Yeah, I’m bullying him! So what?” Not only did Jiang Zhiya not loosen her hold, she hugged Gu Mingxi even more tightly. Then she loosened her arms and said, “Gu Mingxi, why are you so tan now? You’re nearly darker than Zhou Nanzhong, who’s living in Colombia now.”

Gu Mingxi glanced over at Zhou Nanzhong, and he’d indeed gotten tanner and a bit chubbier. Looks like the sun in Colombia was really strong, and the food wasn’t bad either.

Zhou Nanzhong walked up and gave Gu Mingxi a guys’ hug. He knocked onto his back with his fist and said, “Long time no see, bro. Where did you run off to all these years?”

Wang Song followed suit and gave Gu Mingxi a strong hug. Then he pulled Li Xiaoyan over and told Gu Mingxi, “Bro, Li Xiaoyan and I are getting married in May. When we send out invitations to you and Xiao Qing, you’d better show up to the reception dinner!”

Wang Song and Li Xiaoyan’s appearances hadn’t changed much. They just looked a bit more mature. Gu Mingxi looked at them and finally was able to say, “Congratulations. I’ll definitely be there.”

Wu Min walked up to Gu Mingxi and pat him on the shoulder. “Still remember me, your old rival?”

Wu Min and Gu Mingxi had continually fought for 2nd place in their first year



of high school. Back then, Pang Qian stopped caring about Xiao Yujing's test results, because she was someone you just couldn't catch up to. Instead, she always went to find out Wu Min's scores, and then she'd find it regrettable that Gu Mingxi had only lost out by two or three points.

Gu Mingxi had pretty much calmed down. He smiled and nodded. "Of course I remember."

The last to appear in front of Gu Mingxi were Teacher Dai and Xie Yi. Teacher Dai had already started crying. She walked up to him and gave him a warm hug. She said, "How are you now, Gu Mingxi?"

"I'm well, Teacher Dai. Really." Of course, in front of all these people, he really didn't want to cry. But he couldn't stop his eyes from getting red. Gu Mingxi did all he could to stop the tears. Xie Yi walked up to him, still as dazzling as ever. His elegant features were flawless, and with a tailored, slim fitting suit, he was really unspeakably handsome.

Xie Yi looked at Gu Mingxi meaningfully, and then he also hugged him. After the hug, his expression suddenly changed. With a *pow*, he punched Gu Mingxi in the stomach, and it wasn't without some power. The pain made Gu Mingxi bend over. Everyone around them was startled, and Pang Qian cried out in panick, "Xie Yi, what are you doing?!"

"I'm punching him for you!" Xie Yi's eyebrows jumped up. He said to Pang Qian, "You obviously wouldn't be able to bear hitting him, right? This kid went missing for so many years. One light punch isn't really all that much. While he was tanning in Sanya and watching the girls in bikinis, did he ever think of you?!"

"Xie Yi!" Pang Qian called out. She held onto Gu Mingxi's back as she asked, "Gu Mingxi, are you okay?"

Gu Mingxi gasped and finally stood up straight. He shook his head. "I'm fine. Xie Yi was just playing around. Don't worry."

Thanks to Xie Yi, he was able to hold his tears back.

As everyone sat down around the dinner table, Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi take off his coat. Xie Yi handed the menu over to Teacher Dai, and everyone else was chatting among themselves. Gu Mingxi listened on quietly, learning a bit



about these old friends' current situations.

After graduate school at Wuhan University, Zhou Nanzhong started working at an engineering firm and was sent to Colombia to build a power plant. This was his first time back spending New Year's back home since then.

Wang Song worked for the city's labor bureau as a civil servant, and Li Xiaoyan worked at an office. The two of them had already renovated their new home and were preparing to get married.

Jiang Zhiya was transferred and was currently working on news, no longer the weather girl.

Wu Min got into Tsinghua's post graduate program and was currently studying there. After that, he would have to go abroad for two years. He said that later on, he would be doing scientific research work.

There wasn't anything that needed to be said about Xie Yi. After finishing his graduate studies in America, he returned to start a business, and his production company was thriving.

Even Teacher Dai wasn't working at First High anymore. She'd been transferred to Fifth High and been promoted to vice principal. Teacher Dai picked a few dishes to order and handed the menu over to Jiang Zhiya to let everyone else pick some things. And then she smiled as she asked Xie Yi, "Aren't we still waiting on someone?"

Xie Yi's expression was a bit unnatural, a bit absent minded. Just then, the door to their room opened. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi turned around and saw a delicate and pretty woman with long hair standing there. She was taking off her coat and scarf as she apologized, "I'm sorry I'm late."

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Chapter 99

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 99 Under the Chinese Parasol Tree

*We're different from you guys.*

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Just as Gu Mingxi had never seen Jiang Zhiya with short hair, and had almost not recognized her, no one had seen Xiao Yujing with long hair before. In everyone's memories, Xiao Yujing was always a short-haired, thin girl. She had a small, oval face, delicate and gentle features, and a quick wit behind her tranquil eyes.

But the Xiao Yujing standing before them had hair down to her waist. She had on a touch of makeup with a clear and attractive complexion. She wore a dark green coat and a bulging pair of snow boots, the spitting image of a modern, big city beauty.

It really overturned everyone's image of a "female doctorate." Everyone knew that Xiao Yujing didn't dress up much, so they'd expected a makeup-less but confident girl in glasses.

Xiao Yujing smiled at the table of stunned faces. "What, you don't recognize me?"

After the group got back to their senses, they stood up to welcome her. Xiao Yujing greeted each one of them. Zhou Nanzhong said to Gu Mingxi, "Gu Mingxi, your reputation sure is big. Goddess Xiao has graced us with her presence for New Year's. When we invited her out for a meal, she said she didn't have time. It was only when Wu Min said that you'd be here that the goddess agreed to come."

Xiao Yujing also looked over to Gu Mingxi. He'd already stood up and was smiling at her. Xiao Yujing's expression was very even as she said, "Apologies, but



I really am pressed for time this trip back. But when I thought about how I hadn't seen Gu Mingxi since we graduated high school, and how difficult it was for him to come back, I naturally wanted to stop by."

Wang Song quipped, "Goddess, your words aren't quite right. Which of us have you seen after graduation?"

Xiao Yujing wasn't angered, but smiled and said, "First off, don't call me 'goddess.' Secondly, when I was in Beijing, I had a few meals with Wu Min. If you don't believe me, you can ask him."

Wu Min smiled and nodded. "This was before she left for America. We had a few meals together, and we went to each other's schools before."

Zhou Nanzhong dropped his hand onto Wang Song's shoulder. He shook his head and sighed. "See this. The smart kids are just hanging out with themselves, without us. Don't try to butt in."

Xiao Yujing smiled more. "What are you doing, Zhou Nanzhong? The main character today is Gu Mingxi. Why do you keep throwing fire my way?" Then she looked over at Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian beside him. She spoke joyously, "Gu Mingxi, Crab, looks like you two are finally together. I'm really happy to see that."

The only open seat at the table was between Teacher Dai and Xie Yi. Xiao Yujing walked over and put down her bag and scarf. She bent over and hugged Teacher Dai. "Teacher Dai, it's been a long time. How have you been lately?"

"I'm doing well."

Xiao Yujing sat down and she and Teacher Dai exchanged a few more words. They asked about each other's situations, and everyone else tacitly kept from interrupting. Finally, Teacher Dai looked over to her side and said, "There's someone who's been waiting to greet you."

Xiao Yujing turned to face Xie Yi and smiled slightly. "Xie Yi, it's been a very long time. How are you?"

Xie Yi's eyes were stiff, and he seemed very different from his usual self. But it was only for a moment. Soon, his smile returned and his mischievous expression was restored. "Very good. And yourself?"



“I’m pretty good too, just a bit busy,” she said.

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When the food arrived, everyone picked up their chopsticks, chatting and eating together. Facing this table of people, Gu Mingxi really didn’t feel any pressure at all. His right foot was raised to the table, holding his chopsticks. He leaned over to Pang Qian’s ear and whispered, “Why didn’t you tell me earlier that we were eating with old classmates?”

Pang Qian lowered her own voice and said, “I wanted to give you a surprise.”

“Ah...” He sighed. “If you told me earlier, I wouldn’t have needed to dress up like this. These pants are too tight and it’s hard to eat.”

Pang Qian looked at him innocently. “Sorry. I really didn’t expect that you would want... to dress this way.”

Zhou Nanzhong called out, “Hey, hey, hey, you two. What are you whispering about? Let everyone else hear it too.”

Pang Qian looked up and said, “Zhou Nanzhong, you’re really so nosy. Haven’t you ever heard of ‘hear no evil’?” (Note: Or maybe more appropriately ‘listen not to what is contrary to propriety’. I’m not sure if those are really the right translation for this situation, but basically, ‘mind your own business.’)

Zhou Nanzhong chuckled. “Little Crab, seeing how fed up you’re getting, does that mean there’s good news on the horizon?”

Gu Mingxi’s face started burning a little, but Pang Qian had very thick skin. “Not too far away, if not this year, then next year. Don’t worry, I’ll definitely send you a wedding invitation. If you’re still in Colombia, you can just send over a gift.”

“So tasteless! Tasteless!” Zhou Nanzhong was indignant. “Little Crab used to be such an innocent girl. After studying finance, her whole body stinks of copper (i.e. money). Our relationship is so great, why lower it by talking about money?!”

Pang Qian smiled. “Aiyo, who’s the one that said there were two companies in Beijing and Colombia scouting him, saying that the only difference was that the one in Colombia payed more. Without another word, this person just hopped on the plane to work in South America. Definitely a promising youth without eyes



for money!”

Zhou Nanzhong glared angrily at Wang Song, “You even told her about that?!”

Wang Song confessed, “I didn’t. I just told the wife.”

Li Xiaoyan was very unhappy that Wang Song sold her out. “Hey, you didn’t say I couldn’t tell anyone! I just told it to Pang Qian as a joke when we were shopping.”

Zhou Nanzhong was astonished. “As a joke?!” Sitting beside Gu Mingxi, he started complaining. “Gu Mingxi, look at your wife. She used to be such a dumb little girl, and now she knows how to ridicule. Must be all the contact with American and Hong Kong money. You’d better be careful in the future. You used to lead her, but now, she’ll probably lead you along.”

Jiang Zhiya spoke up for Pang Qian. “Zhou Nanzhong, you can actually say Pang Qian used to be dumb? Don’t forget that her college entrance exam score was higher than yours by four points!”

Even Teacher Dai joined in. “I remember the year that you graduated, Wuhan’s entrance cutoff was lower than usual. Zhou Nanzhong was lucky. If it were the year before or after, he might not have made it in.”

Zhou Nanzhong nearly wanted to cry. “Teacher Dai...”

Gu Mingxi listened to them bicker, a faint smile on his face. It had already been eight years since he’d seen them last. Hearing them, his memories floated back to his school years. Those endless practice problems, the noisy table tennis gym, the exam countdown on the blackboard, the days and nights spent doing homework with Pang Qian, and all the people gathered together in the cafeteria...

The food at Donghua Hotel were exquisite and delicious. Pang Qian grabbed a piece of tenderloin and placed it into Gu Mingxi’s bowl. She said quietly, “Be careful, it’s hot.” And then she served him a bowl of chicken soup, and quietly added a piece of chicken. Gu Mingxi lifted his eyes to look at her. He really wanted to tell her that he missed those years that they ate side by side in the school cafeteria.

After Wu Min and Xiao Yujing talked for awhile, everyone else was thrown into



confusion. Wu Min asked Xiao Yujing about some schools in America as they had studied similar things. Xiao Yujing responded patiently, even explaining about certain school's research laboratories and doctoral programs. Sometimes she would say things in English, though she wasn't trying to show off. To Xiao Yujing, English was basically her mother tongue. And after spending a few years in America, as she tried to explain to Wu Min about the situation in America, she hadn't even considered translating (to Chinese). Fortunately, Wu Min's English was also very good, and the two of them communicated without issue. That couldn't be said for the rest of the group

Jiang Zhiya saw that Zhou Nanwei looked like he was listening to scripture. She laughed. "Hey, aren't you abroad? Why haven't you picked up the language?"

Zhou Nanzhong got angry. "Lady, they speak Spanish in Colombia!"

Li Xiaoyan and Pang Qian spoke across the table. She asked Pang Qian, "Crab, since you're together with Gu Mingxi now, are you still planning on post graduate studies?"

Pang Qian halted for a moment and recalled that she had spoken to Li Xiaoyan about going back to school before. They both started working right after graduation, and eventually, they both thought about post graduate studies. Pang Qian glanced over at Gu Mingxi and realized that he'd turned to look at her. His gaze held a glimmer of suspicion. Pang Qian smiled and told Li Xiaoyan, "I'm not planning on it for the time being."

Li Xiaoyan said, "I'm planning on going back for post graduate studies."

Pang Qian was surprised, "Really? You decided?"

Li Xiaoyan nodded. "You don't know, but it's really hard to get promoted in my field without at least a master's degree. After Wang Song and I get married, I'll be able to get my degree in a year and a half if I'm quick. I plan to finish my studies before having a child, otherwise there won't be time after that."

Zhou Nanzhong asked Wang Song, "What about you? Are you going back to school? Your field puts importance on education background as well."

Li Xiaoyan said, "Yeah, I've been trying to convince him to go back, but he's worried he won't be good at studying after so many years. I told him I would go



back to school first. After all, guys don't have to give birth to children. It's okay if he goes a few years later."

Wang Song's expression was a bit unnatural. "We'll talk about these things again later. There's no rush."

Xiao Yujing was very interested in this topic, so she joined in on Li Xiaoyan and Pang Qian's discussion. She encouraged the two of them to go back to school, and it made Jiang Zhiya grow eager.

"Anchor Jiang, what you need as an anchor isn't more school, but plastic surgery." Zhou Nanzhong's filthy mouth extremely angered Jiang Zhiya. She picked up a tomato and threw it at him.

"Everyone says that girls who get a doctorate become extinguished old ladies who never find a husband. My cousin got her doctorate, and now she's having a hard time finding a boyfriend." Jiang Zhiya rested her chin in her hands. "But I think Xiao Yujing's really pretty. Who would ever guess that she's got a doctorate degree."

"I still haven't finished it." Xiao Yujing laughed. "My advisor really wants me to continue doing research after I get my degree though."

Everyone: ==

This get together was very pleasant, with no barriers and no ice. Everyone spoke very freely about the foolish things they did as kids in school, and they talked about their plans for the future.

There were two people at the table who remained quiet. One was Gu Mingxi. He usually didn't speak much in front of people, and since he smiled along with others, no one really noticed.

The other was Xie Yi. He'd always been a very lively character, but that evening, he barely said anything. He just drank one cup after another.

They were drinking red wine. No one else really drank very much, but when the others weren't watching, Xie Yi suddenly got drunk.

After dinner concluded, Zhou Nanzhong and Wu Min grabbed a taxi home together, since they were headed in the same direction. Wang Song drank so Li



Xiaoyan drove them home. They also sent Teacher Dai home. Jiang Zhiya had to get back to work at the broadcast station, so she drove away on her own. That left Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi, Xiao Yujing, and a drunken Xie Yi.

Pang Qian didn't drink, and she knew where Xie Yi lived, so she suggested that she would send him home. Xiao Yujing said, "I'll send him. There are some things I want to say to him anyway."

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In front of Donghua Hotel, a cold wind was blowing, and the contents of Xie Yi's stomach were unsettled. He ran over to the side, leaned against a tree trunk, and started vomiting. Xiao Yujing stood beside him and helped pat his back. Then she pulled out a napkin for him to wipe his mouth. Xie Yi knew that he looked a mess. He'd never let himself go so much before, and he couldn't hold his cool anymore.

Pang Qian went to a small convenient store and bought a bottle of water. She walked over to his side and Xiao Yujing stepped aside slightly. Pang Qian turned back and saw her walk over to Gu Mingxi, who wasn't very far away.

Xie Yi drank half the bottle of water. Pang Qian asked him, "Are you feeling better?"

Xie Yi nodded. Pang Qian helped him up and sighed. "What are you doing? Why did you make yourself so unhappy for all these years? Xie Yi, you're really not like yourself, you know."

"Are you lecturing me?" Xie Yi straightened up, and propped himself up against the tree. His face was flushed and he reeked of alcohol. There was a cynical expression in his eyes as he said, "Crab, how long did you wait for Gu Mingxi?"

Pang Qian looked at him in the eyes. "We're different from you guys."

"What's so different?"

She responded firmly, "Everything is different."

A surge of anger came out from Xie Yi's eyes. He stared furiously at Pang Qian, and she, not at all scared, stared right back at him.



She kept standing with him under the tree, neither of them turning back to look behind them. There was heavy traffic on the street, and they couldn't hear the whispers of the two people a few meters behind them.

A few minutes later, Xiao Yujing walked back over. She asked Xie Yi, "Are you feeling better? Can you walk?"

Xie Yi silently nodded. After saying goodbye with Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, he and Xiao Yujing got onto a taxi.

Now only Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were left in the cold wind. Pang Qian walked over to his side and hugged him lightly. She looked up at him and said, "Let's go."

She drove him back to Shark's house. Gu Mingxi had drunk a bit of red wine, so he was looking a little tipsy. He asked Pang Qian, "Are you working tomorrow?"

"Yeah."

"Next Monday is Valentine's Day."

"Ah?"

"After we spend Valentine's Day together, I'll return to Sanya." His speech was very slow and a bit hoarse. "This semester is graduation season, so I'll be really busy. It's my first time being in charge of a graduating class."

"Mm, make sure to work well. I'll fly over to visit you when I have time."

"I was wondering..." Gu Mingxi blinked his eyes and looked at the flashing lights on the street in front of the windshield. "Would this be the only time in my life that I'll lead a graduating class."

Pang Qian knew that he was feeling unsure inside, but she wasn't sure how to help him in that moment. Suddenly, Gu Mingxi straightened up in his seat. He looked out the car window and said, "The Little Market's still here?"

Pang Qian's glanced over to where he was looking. On their way back to the heavy machinery area, they passed through the center of E City, and they also passed by the park near First High.

There were a lot of red lanterns hanging for the New Year's, lighting up the area. It looked very festive. Pang Qian asked, "It's still early. Do you want to go in



for a walk?”

Gu Mingxi nodded. “It’ll help me sober up too. I’m feeling a little dizzy.”

Pang Qian stopped the car and walked over to the park with Gu Mingxi. There weren’t many people there, but the New Year atmosphere was every present. They walked down the small street to inside the park. In the past, that was where the street vendors congregated, but there was no one there now.

Pang Qian looked around and saw that bench under the parasol tree. She tugged on Gu Mingxi’s sleeve. “Let’s go sit there.”

Gu Mingxi looked over and then bit his lip, his expression bashful.

Pang Qian and he sat down on the bench. She giggled. “It was here, right?”

He lowered his head, and almost incomprehensibly said, “Mm.”

“You... Didn’t you guess that I just didn’t see the letter?” Her voice sounded a bit angry. Gu Mingxi responded innocently, “How would I know that you cut your finger?”

“You really don’t understand me. If I had seen the letter, would I have not shown up?”

“Why couldn’t you have (not shown up)?” Gu Mingxi said, slightly bitterly. “I thought that you’d been scared.”

“Idiot.” She really couldn’t help it, and she pinched at his waist. “Idiot, idiot, idiot!”

After a moment, the two of them quieted. Their voices were no longer ringing in the park, and it became very serene. The parasol tree above their heads was just covered in leaf-less branches. The wind blew and they rustled. Occasionally, a car would sound in the distance. Gu Mingxi turned to look at Pang Qian, and Pang Qian leaned her head back. He said, “If you’re cold, come closer. My body’s really warm.”

Pang Qian gave him a toothy grin and quickly scooted over to him. Gu Mingxi was indeed very warm, and he smelled slightly of alcohol. Pang Qian wrapped her arms around him and put her hands into his pocket. It was really warm.

At this point, Gu Mingxi asked, “Pang Pang, did you tell Li Xiaoyan that you



were planning to go back to school?”

Actually, when this topic came up during dinner, Pang Qian had felt Gu Mingxi’s spirit drop. Even though he’d been smiling as he listened to their conversation, she knew that he was a bit concerned about it.

At the table, there were two doctoral students, three people with masters degrees, four people in research. And they all studied good majors at good schools. The odd one out was Gu Mingxi, who only had a high school diploma.

It wasn’t that he couldn’t study, and it wasn’t that he didn’t like to study. It’s just that after some uncontrollable events and incidences, he’d moved further and further away from school.

Pang Qian tucked her head into his shoulder and said, “Didn’t I already tell you? I thought about going back to school in the past, but right now, I’m busy with work, and I keep feeling that it’s unnecessary.”

A bit surprised, he asked, “Unnecessary?”

“Do you think it’s necessary?”

“I’m not familiar with your line of work.” He spoke quietly. “I think that if you want to go back to school, you don’t have to be over conscious of me. Even if you have to go abroad, it’s okay. If you think it will be too costly, I’ll make money to support you.”

Pang Qian was stunned. After a long while, she still didn’t say anything.

A bit later, she carefully asked, “Gu Mingxi, do you regret quitting school?”

She originally thought that he would say that he regretted it, or at least consider the question a bit before answering. Instead, he responded quickly, “I don’t regret it.”

“Why not?”

“Even if I was able to get my undergraduate degree, it would have been hard to join the work force. I wouldn’t be able to be anything more than average in that field. Pang Pang, just because I was a good student, it doesn’t mean that I would be able to learn and do everything I tried.” He spoke very sincerely. “If I had studied English, law, or finance back then, maybe I would have been able to



persevere and continue, but computer engineering...” He shook his head slowly. “I suspect I really don’t have any talent in that subject.”

Pang Qian looked into the dark night, to Gu Mingxi’s shining eyes and slightly furrowed brows. She suddenly asked, “Gu Mingxi, have you ever thought about going back to school to study?”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 100

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 100 Dream Becomes Reality

*If you died, what would happen to me?*

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Gu Mingxi returned to Shark's house and his whole family was gathered around the TV. The little Tian Tian happily ran over when she saw him walk through the door. She called out, "Uncle!"

She seemed to like Gu Mingxi very much. He smiled and crouched down to welcome her hug as Tian Tian ran into him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him on the cheek.

Shark called out to Gu Mingxi, "Kid, come over to eat fruit and watch TV."

Gu Mingxi shook his head. "Not this time. I had a bit to drink, so I want to wash up and rest."

Shark asked, "Do you need my help?"

"No..." Just as he opened his mouth, he started to regret it immediately. "Shark, I really do need your help today. Can you help me take off my clothes?"

Shark looked him over, and then he laughed as the two of them headed up the stairs. "You're dressed very nicely today."

He laughed sheepishly, his emotions still in a flurry.

Shark helped him take off his shirt and pants, and then Gu Mingxi headed into the bathroom. As he was about to shower, he suddenly thought of Pang Qian's words again.

Clothes off, he stood in front of the mirror and looked back at his reflection.

Gu Mingxi was already 27 years old, not young anymore. After all the struggles he went through, his face looked older than others his age, like Xie Yi. Although



his lips were still red and his skin still tender, Gu Mingxi had some wrinkles around his eyes.

He'd have to study for a year in preparation. A 28 year old man going to take the college entrance exams. Wasn't that more like a fantasy than real life?

Under the parasol tree in the park, Pang Qian told Gu Mingxi that she'd spoken to Teacher Dai privately during dinner. Teacher Dai was the vice principal at Fifth High and there were new teachers joining every year. She said that Fifth High was a top high school, and the teachers at those kinds of schools usually went to graduate school. It wasn't as severe for junior high schools though, and an undergraduate degree would suffice.

Pang Qian asked about primary school.

Teacher Dai said that for most primary schools, an undergraduate degree was enough, and sometimes even junior college graduates could work there. There were some teachers who didn't study education, but if they excelled in their field, that would also sometimes be sufficient.

Pang Qian told Gu Mingxi, "Do you want to keep teaching? If you do, then we'll just both work really hard. When Teacher Dai heard about your experience in Sanya, she said that if you could get your undergraduate diploma, she could help you find a job later on."

For Gu Mingxi, school and studying had already long ago become a dead dream. He thought that he would never return to the school campus for the rest of his life. But when he heard Pang Qian's words, he had a hard time digesting it. He said, "But even if I can get into a college, by the time I finish, I'll already be 32."

"So what?" Pang Qian's eyes sparkled. "There's no age restriction on the college entrance exam. Who said that only teenagers could go to school?! Have you seen on the news? A few years ago, a 60 year old grandpa participated in the entrance exams too. You're still so young!"

"But..." Gu Mingxi still felt like he was in a dream. Pang Qian reached over to his crippled shoulders and said gently, "I know you're apprehensive, Gu Mingxi. You won't be alone at school. I'll go with you, I'll go to graduate school. You don't have to worry about anything. I'll always be here with you."



Gu Mingxi looked at himself in the mirror once more. He wriggled his shoulders and the skin and bones there moved oddly. For nearly his entire life, there had been a lot of people who pitied Gu Mingxi. His clever brain, elegant appearance, and his family background. If that accident hadn't happened, he would have become the pride of everyone. He'd have become some expert in a field.

"If" has always been a very cruel thing. Right now, Gu Mingxi's physical state means that he won't be able to work most jobs. It's a regret that he'll carry all his life, something he can't reverse. But Gu Mingxi still had the chance to change his fate, little by little.

–Do you want to keep teaching?

–Yes.

It wasn't a glamorous job and it didn't pay exceptionally well. It was tough, complicated, with a lot of pressure. Sometimes you came across unreasonably parents. But this profession gave thousands of families hope. As a responsible teacher, one could change many lives, just like Dou Dou's.

Gu Mingxi looked at his reflection, and his gaze slowly became determined. He knew that his fighting spirit had been ignited. His dream that had been sleeping all these years was finally awakened.

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After Pang Qian sent Gu Mingxi back to Shark's house, she returned home to the Prosperous North. After she parked her car, she carried her bag out and heard a humming sound nearby.

As she walked, she suddenly heard a low voice say, "Qian Qian."

Pang Qian was startled. She turned around, and under the courtyard lights, she saw Gu Guoxiang.

It had been many years since she'd seen Gu Guoxiang. The last time must have been back in high school, before the college entrance exams. She was chatting with Gu Mingxi in Apt. 502 when Gu Guoxiang came over looking for Li Han.

She hadn't seen him in eight years. Gu Guoxiang was no longer the graceful and extraordinary man in Pang Qian's memories. He'd gotten a lot older, the wrinkles heavy on his face, and he'd put a bit of weight. No matter how you



looked at him, he was definitely a man over 50.

“Uncle... Gu?” Pang Qian asked, guarded. “Are you here to see my parents? They’re upstairs.”

“No, Qian Qian, I came to see you.” Gu Guoxiang walked over to Pang Qian. After a bit of silence, he got to the point and asked, “Has Mingxi come back?”

Up close, Pang Qian could see even more clearly how Gu Guoxiang had aged. His dyed hair was growing out white at the roots. He pulled out a cigarette and lit it. Behind his glasses, he squinted his eyes, and then asked again, “Qian Qian, tell me. Has Mingxi come back?”

Pang Qian was silent for a long while, and then she finally nodded. “Mm, he came back.”

“Why didn’t he look for me?” Gu Guoxiang sounded unhappy and also a bit suspicious. “Do you have his phone number? Can you give it to me? Qian Qian, it’s already been so many years since I’ve seen him. I really miss him.”

Pang Qian blinked her eyes and then pulled out her phone. “Uncle, give me your phone number. I’ll let Gu Mingxi call you.”

“I haven’t changed my number. Mingxi knows it.”

Pang Qian lowered her phone. “Uncle, I’m sorry, I can’t give you his phone number. I have to ask for his considerations.”

“Nonsense! Qian Qian, how can not understand things? Mingxi too! He was away for so many years! And when he comes back, he doesn’t contact me! Does he still consider me his father?!” Gu Guoxiang was a bit angry, and his leadership senses came out. He felt that he was the senior here and Pang Qian was of the younger generation. He’d already searched her out and asked her calmly, so how could she make him lose so much face.

Pang Qian looked at him a bit blankly. Then she said, “Uncle, did you know that Gu Mingxi quit school?”

Gu Guoxiang was taken aback, and then he grew shocked. “Mingxi quit school?! When did this happen?”

“You didn’t know?” A snicker escaped from her lips. “That means that in all



these years, you hadn't once gone to B University to check up on him. Otherwise, how could you not know? He quit after his first year there."

Gu Guoxiang's face turned red and white. Pang Qian said, "Uncle, I'm younger than you and there are some things I shouldn't say to you, because it's very impolite. But I can't stop myself. Uncle, you've never once sought out Gu Mingxi in all these years, so what right do you have to tell him to search you out now that he's back?"

Pang Qian didn't hide this meeting and she told Gu Mingxi all about it. Gu Mingxi thought it over all night, and then the next day, he called Gu Guoxiang.

The two of them met at a cafe. They didn't hug or greet each other. They didn't have a long-awaited, moving reunion. And there was definitely no crying scene. Gu Mingxi sat down across from Gu Guoxiang and looked at his father. He spoke quietly, "Dad."

His expression was calm and even, neither happy nor angry, just like a stranger's. Gu Guoxiang felt a knife cutting into his heart. He would have rather seen Gu Mingxi glare at him with hatred, to denounce him loudly. At least then he would know how to react. Maybe he would have cried painfully and embraced his son. He would apologize, repent, and then win his son's forgiveness.

But Gu Mingxi's expression didn't waver in any way. He just smiled lightly and said, "Dad, how have you been?"

Gu Guoxiang was startled. He nodded, "Alright."

He asked Gu Mingxi about his situation the past years, and Gu Mingxi responded simply. So simply that he covered six or seven years worth of time in just two minutes.

Even with Li Han's death, he spoke succinctly.

Gu Guoxiang wanted to ask for more details, but Gu Mingxi just smiled and shook his head. "Dad, what's passed has passed. There's no need to talk about it anymore."

Okay, Gu Guoxiang thought. He asked about Gu Mingxi's future plans instead. Gu Mingxi said, "I'm teaching in Sanya. I have to return before winter break



ends.”

Gu Guoxiang asked, “Are you together with Qian Qian now? I mean... Are you two dating?”

Gu Mingxi nodded without a word.

Gu Guoxiang asked again, “When do you plan to return to E City to stay?”

“I’m not sure yet.” Gu Mingxi continued smiling. “Dad, don’t worry. Even when I come back, I won’t bother you. You don’t have to be so concerned about me. I can take care of myself.”

Gu Guoxiang nearly acted on his anger over how Gu Mingxi glossed over everything with those words. But when he saw Gu Mingxi’s calm expression, he suddenly felt cold inside. Because he’d suddenly become aware that Gu Mingxi wasn’t angry at him, but rather had spoken genuinely.

This meeting lasted only half an hour. Gu Mingxi declined Gu Guoxiang’s offer to a meal and said that he’d already made other plans. Gu Guoxiang had no other option, and could only send him out.

Pang Qian’s red Sagitar was already parked outside the cafe. When she saw Gu Mingxi, she got out of her car. Gu Guoxiang saw the two young adults and said heavily, “Mingxi, if you run into any troubles, you can tell me. I can help you.”

Gu Mingxi was quiet for a moment, and then he nodded. “I know. (I give) thanks to you, (Dad).”

On the way to the Prosperous North, Gu Mingxi remained silent. His forehead stuck to the passenger side window as he stared out in a daze.

Blood is thicker than water— What an interesting phrase. Gu Mingxi had seen Dou Dou’s father before. When he was sober and saw the bruises and wounds all over his son’s body, he couldn’t stop himself from crying. But when he was ill (drunk?), he became a monster and lost his mind.

Dou Dou’s dad was sick, so there was some room to forgive. But Gu Mingxi’s dad?

“Do you think I’m very stubborn?” Midway into their journey, Gu Mingxi suddenly asked this question. He didn’t turn his head, just speaking softly.



Pang Qian shook her head, “I don’t.”

“When I came back, I should have taken the initiative to see him,” Gu Mingxi said. “He’s my father after all, and he raised me for many years. And when my mother was sick, it’s not that he didn’t offer any help.”

Pang Qian knew that he was just speaking out all the things on his mind, so she didn’t cut in.

Gu Mingxi finally pulled back his gaze and looked over at Pang Qian. He said, “But I can’t forget the state my mother was in when she died. Pang Pang, my mom never did anything to my dad that she would need to feel sorry about. Her life shouldn’t have been like this. Sometimes I wonder if it would have been better for things to have been more serious when I was electrocuted back then. If I had died then, I would have forever remained the smart, healthy, good son in my father’s memories. He would remember me, miss me, and he would love my mother even more. And then they would have been able to have another child who would be nearly 20 years old now. He or she would be studying at a top university, and be our parents’ pride.”

“Then what about me?” Pang Qian asked. “If you died, what would happen to me?”

“None of our story would have happened, Pang Pang.” He laughed lightly and even shrugged his shoulders. “You’d have a really awesome boyfriend right now, and you might even be married.”

“Did you ever consider that if you had died, I might have lived in regret for the rest of my life?” Pang Qian didn’t turn to look at him, but was focused on driving. Her tone was even and ordinary. “I was the one who threw that frisbee onto the transformer. I would have felt that I killed you.”

“What about now?” Gu Mingxi asked her. “Are you together with me to make up for it?”

“What do you think?” Pang Qian’s lips curved up. “Gu Mingxi, without you in my life, I would be a very different person now. I studied finance, so I wouldn’t enter into a money losing deal. Do you think I would stick by your side for my entire life to make it up to you, if I didn’t love you?”



He looked at her with worry. Pang Qian continued, "I'm not sure when you started thinking about 'death,' but from what I know about you, you've never thought about dying. You tried harder than anyone else to live. That's why when you went missing and I couldn't find you, I kept telling myself to live well, because I knew that somewhere on the map, you were working hard to live well too. I knew that we would finally meet again, and I hoped that I could become someone excellent and brand new when I stood in front of you, the way you once expected of me. Everyone else would say, 'Pang Qian, you're lazy and a glutton. You're not smart, not the studying type.' But you never gave up on me, and you kept pulling me forward. Gu Mingxi, I'm warning you, you'd better not talk about things like dying or living again! Your mom's already passed away. Regardless of how your relationship with your father turns out in the future, you have to remember this! That for me, Pang Qian, you have to keep living well!"

After she spoke, she blinked her eyes a bit. Gu Mingxi stared at her in a bit of a daze. He waited until the car stopped at a red light intersection, and then he moved closer to her and nudged her with his left shoulder.

"Pang Pang, don't cry," he said. "I promise you, I won't talk about it again. Actually, what you said was right. I've never thought about wanting to die. I was just saying, if I had died in the beginning..."

"You're still talking about it!" Pang Qian turned to glare at him, and Gu Mingxi quickly silenced himself. Then he said, "Okay, I won't talk about it ever again!"

"You can't even dare to think about it!"

"I won't think about it."

His face was filled with sincerity and also regret. Pang Qian finally stopped her tears and smiled. "Zhou Nanzhong was right. In the past, you were always the one to lead and guide me. In the future, I'll be the one to lead you."

Gu Mingxi glanced at her and thought to himself— When it came to something neither of them was familiar with, who would lead whom?

Pang Qian looked suspiciously at his reddening face and asked, "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing." He cut off his thoughts and then looked out the window at the



passing scenery.

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Gu Mingxi didn't meet again with Gu Guoxiang. After the Spring Festival break ended, the real estate agency was back at work. Pang Qian started taking care of the purchasing procedures. She gave all her information to the agent who went to the bank to check the mortgage. The agent said, "Ms. Pang, you have a very good job and good credit. You've never bought a house before either. The mortgage shouldn't be a problem." Gu Mingxi finally felt settled.

They spent Valentine's Day together, though it wasn't really a special occasion. They went to a restaurant for a meal and then went to watch a movie. Then Gu Mingxi bought Pang Qian a rose while they walked down the street.

"You're so petty." Pang Qian looked at the rose wrapped in clear plastic. She giggled. "You're trying to win me over with ten dollars?"

Gu Mingxi smiled but didn't say anything. When Pang Qian sent him back to Shark's house, he told her quietly that the present he'd gotten her was upstairs.

Pang Qian waited in the car for him. When Gu Mingxi made his way down, there was a paper bag in his mouth.

Pang Qian happily accepted the bag and pulled out what was inside. Suddenly, she was dumbfounded. Gu Mingxi had actually bought her a purple swimsuit—And a bikini at that!

Pang Qian didn't know what to say, and Gu Mingxi's face reddened too. Seeing her gaze turn suspicious, he immediately explained, "I was wondering what I should buy you, and I thought I should get you something you'd use. And then I suddenly thought that it would be getting warm in a few months, and when you come to visit Sanya, you'd probably go swimming. So I bought you a swimsuit..."

"How did you buy it?" Pang Qian was very suspicious. "A grown up man like you went to the market to buy a swimsuit?"

"No..." Gu Mingxi said. "I had Xiao Le (Shark's wife) help me out. I told her the color and style."

"Then, then what about the size?"



“I told her.” Gu Mingxi smiled. “It should fit. Your figure, I know it well.”

Pang Qian nearly spit out blood.

After Valentine’s Day, Gu Mingxi still had another week of vacation. He decided to return to Sanya to get ready for classes. Pang Qian was very busy with work as well. The two of them set up when they would meet again.

When Qingming came, they would head to Z City to visit Li Han’s grave. (Note: Also known as Tomb-sweeping Day, and occurs in early April on the Western calendar.)

Pang Qian sent Gu Mingxi to the airport. Before he got to security, she really couldn’t bear to see him go. She hugged him for a long while, until Gu Mingxi gave her a long kiss. Then she finally and reluctantly let him go.

After his plane took off, Pang Qian held Gu Mingxi’s thick coat in her hands, staring off in a daze. She sniffed the coat, and it was full of his scent. Pang Qian stuffed her head inside his coat, and she realized that she’d already started missing him.

Gu Mingxi flew back to Sanya and returned to his house in the Sanya Bay. He spoke with Dou Dou’s mother on the phone, who said she was a bit busy for the next few days, so she would send Dou Dou back home on the weekend.

He slept alone by himself that night. The next morning when he woke up, Gu Mingxi didn’t feel well. He was dizzy, his throat was itchy, and his nose kept running. E City was very cold, and Sanya was very warm. Gu Mingxi knew that, the sudden temperature change had caused him to catch a cold.

Gu Mingxi was very healthy and rarely got sick, but when he did get sick, it took awhile to get better. When others caught a cold, they would get better in four or five days. If he caught a cold, it got very serious. Without exception, his light cold would become serious. He would get a fever, start coughing, and he’d only slowly get better after he went to the hospital for an IV drip.

He really hated getting sick. Dou Dou was so young, so he wouldn’t be able to help him at the hospital anyway. And then he didn’t want to disturb the other teachers.

It was really a very helpless thing. Although he’d lost his two arms, he was very



passive when it came to many things.

Gu Mingxi cooked himself some congee and had that for breakfast, and then lunch, and then dinner. He sat on the tall chair in the kitchen and grabbed the food from there. Even when he started feeling dizzy and faint, he forced himself to keep eating.

When it was too tough, he would go to sleep. He didn't even dare to turn on the air conditioning. His nose kept running, so he could only sit up time and time again to grab a tissue with his foot and raise it to his nose.

He drank a lot of water, and then he had to keep using the restroom. Every time he had to use the restroom, he always had to take off his pants and it was very annoying. Gu Mingxi grew tired of it.

That evening, Pang Qian called. Without thinking much, Gu Mingxi just picked up the phone. Pang Qian was startled to hear his hoarse voice, and then he couldn't help coughing a few times. Pang Qian asked, "Are you sick?"

"Mm, I caught a cold. It's probably from the change in temperatures." Gu Mingxi laid down on his bed, with his ear to the phone. "Don't worry, I'll get better soon."

"You can only say something like that to Teacher Ji. As if I don't know you! Who knows how long it will take you to get better after a cold!"

Hearing the anxiety in her voice, Gu Mingxi's heart softened, and his body didn't feel so terrible anymore. He said, "Pang Pang, hearing your voice, my head doesn't hurt anymore. Really."

"Have you gone to the doctor?"

"No, I don't need it. It's just a cold."

"Did you take some medicine?"

"I took some White With Black." (Note: This is an over the counter cold medicine)

"Make sure to drink a lot of water."

"I drank a lot."



“Did you take your temperature? Do you have a fever?”

“A little. It’s not 38 degrees yet.”

Pang Qian was silent for a moment. Then she suddenly said, “No, Gu Mingxi, I won’t talk to you now.”

She quickly hung up the phone. Gu Mingxi didn’t have the strength, so he didn’t bother calling her back. It was already 7:30 at night, and he fell asleep on his bed. Occasionally he would get up to go to the restroom or blow his nose, but most of the time, he was deep in sleep.

The sky was already dark and the world outside the window had grown quiet. At some time, there was a rustle sounded from the living room.

Gu Mingxi didn’t have the strength to get up. He didn’t even open his eyes. He wondered, what was that noise? A rat? A cockroach? A thief?

Let them be. There was nothing worth money in his house anyway. As he was thinking this, he heard a thump sound. Gu Mingxi turned onto his side and forced his eyes open.

He heard a pair of footsteps, lightly and distinctly. The light in the living room was also on, and the rays of light came through the crack of the door.

Gu Mingxi wondered if this thief was crazy. He was stealing and he turned the lights on?!

He groggily sat up and was about to go out to see. That’s when the door to his room opened.

The living room was lit up, but his room was pitch black. That person walked toward him, her back to the light. He could only see her silhouette. He wondered if his brain was cooked and he was imagining things.

She sat down on the edge of his bed, but didn’t say his name. She just reached out her hand to feel his forehead. Quietly, she said, “Oh no, it’s a bit hot. You really have a fever.”

As she spoke, she wanted to get up and get him a towel. But just as she got up, he hurried to call out, “Don’t go.”

She turned to look at him, stunned. He was unable to grab onto her, so he sat



up and leaned his whole body onto her.

She naturally embraced him and let him rest his head on her abdomen. He wasn't wearing a shirt, and his body was covered in sweat. Arms around his shoulders, she said, "I'm going to get you something cold for your head."

"Don't go," he said. "Don't go. Don't go."

"Okay, I won't go." She smiled.

"Let me keep dreaming." He laughed, his cheeks taking in the warmth of her body. He rubbed his cheek on her like a cat. "It's been a long time since I've had such a good dream. Pang Pang, don't go."

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 101

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 101 Three Days and Two Nights

*With hearts entwined, we will grow old together.*

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Gu Mingxi recalled some things of the past.

Several years ago, while his mother was still alive, he stayed with her in S City for her treatment. Before any of their relatives came to help, Li Han usually just stayed in the rental house, and Gu Mingxi was in charge of dealing with their daily needs. But because he often went in and out into the cold, he happened to catch a cold.

That cold lasted for more than half a year. He would constantly have a fever or cough. Li Han tried to get him to see the doctor, but Gu Mingxi didn't want to bother others about it. He just bought some medicine for fevers, colds, and coughing.

Half a year later, when Li Han was undergoing a round of chemotherapy, Huang Lingli came to help take care of her. They decided that he would stay with his mother during the day and Huang Lingli would stay at night.

Those were the few days that Gu Mingxi's symptoms were the most intense. When he stayed with his mother during the day, the nurse that came to check on her would also tell that he wasn't well. She pleaded with him to get treatment, but Gu Mingxi was worried that he wouldn't be able to watch over his mother while he was getting an infusion. So he pushed through a few more days, until his mother's chemotherapy was completed.

When he got back to the rental house in the evening, he was exhausted and dizzy. When he sat down on the edge of his bed to take off his pants, his mind suddenly went blank. His chest hurt, he swayed, and then his body fell onto the



floor.

It was the middle of the night when Gu Mingxi woke up. The moonlight shined in through the windows and he'd maintained the posture he'd fallen over in.

Thankfully his room was heated. Even though he was lying on the floor, he didn't feel very cold. Only, his head and his chest did hurt. With great difficulty, he climbed up and then he realized he was still in the midst of taking his pants off. He used his efforts to pull off his pants and then went into the bathroom. The reflection of his face in the mirror was dark and gloomy. His eyes were dull, there was a bump on his forehead, and his head was in pain.

He still had a fever. He was still coughing. His chest still hurt and it was hard to breathe. After he washed, he moved himself to his bed, and then he felt a pang of regret.

If a few hours ago, he'd fainted and then fallen to his death, what would have happened to his mother?

He slept for two hours and then got up to cook congee for his mom. He put it into an insulated container and then put that into his backpack.

He put on his backpack and braved the early morning cold to get to the hospital. After he found Huang Lingli, he asked her to stay with his mother for a few more hours so that he could see the doctor and get an IV. From the sofa bed, Huang Lingli yawned and said impatiently, "I spent the whole night here, you should let me sleep a bit. I'll come back a bit earlier in the evening and then you can go see a doctor."

Gu Mingxi could only let her leave and stay with his mom.

But in the afternoon, he couldn't hold on anymore. His coughing had gotten very severe and he was afraid he'd disturb his mother. He walked into the corridor, but before he could walk very far, he collapsed onto the ground.

Thankfully he was in the hospital. The doctors and nurses quickly moved him, and they found out he had pneumonia.

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Gu Mingxi slowly opened his eyes and looked around. He was at his house in Sanya. The sky was already bright and he was sleeping alone in his soft bed. The



window was open, a gentle breeze blowing in past the curtains. The sky outside was sunny and clear.

Gu Mingxi knew that his fever was very serious. He wanted to go to the bathroom, but he didn't have the strength. He closed his eyes for awhile, and then he struggled to sit up.

When he walked out of his room, Gu Mingxi immediately saw a travel bag outside of the living room and also a pair of female shoes. He stared for a moment and then someone walked out from the kitchen. When she saw him, she laughed. "You're awake? Do you feel any better?"

Gu Mingxi looked at her in a daze. Shocked at finding that last night's events weren't a dream, his lips slowly curved up. The warmth and joy he felt inside slowly flowed to his eyes.

Pang Qian was wearing an apron and carrying a soup ladle. She said, "I'm cooking congee, but I'm not sure if it will be any good. There are some frozen dumplings in the freezer. Do you want to eat dumplings?"

He didn't answer her, his eyes just circling around her. Pang Qian had put down the ladle and dried her hands. She walked over to him and complained, "You're sick with a fever and you're walking around without any clothes on. Aren't you afraid your cold will get worse?" She walked over to him, dressed and pulled out a clean t-shirt and helped him put it on. Then she asked, "Do you need to go to the bathroom?"

He didn't answer her, but then he foolishly nodded his head.

"I'll help you." She pushed him over to the bathroom and quickly and familiarly helped him pull his pants down. She pulled open his boxers and was about to help him pee.

In the past few weeks in E City, Gu Mingxi had spent a lot of time with Pang Qian. Hanging around outside, eating, drinking coffee, watching movies, shopping... Occasionally he would have to use the bathroom, so Pang Qian helped him.

At many of the places they went to, aside from male and female restrooms, there were also ones with disability access. Although it was designed for those



with wheelchairs, for Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian, a single restroom was still better.

She seemed to already have become accustomed to this intimate act, and she didn't get embarrassed because of the differences between men and women. But Gu Mingxi would still get a bit embarrassed. After all, he was a man, and there were some things that couldn't be controlled just because of his will.

For example, the question from that 'Warm Harbor' radio show that once troubled Pang Qian greatly— What was morning wood? Pang Qian pretty much knew the answer to that now.

Even up until Gu Mingxi washed his face, it was still a bit red. Pang Qian smiled as she watched him eating. Gu Mingxi felt her eyes on him and looked up. He asked extremely quietly, "When did you get here?"

"2 in the morning."

"You don't have to work today?"

"It's Friday today, so I took the day off and got a return ticket for Sunday night." Pang Qian smiled again. "I get three days with you."

Gu Mingxi felt very happy, but instead he said, "It's not that serious. You didn't have to come."

"Not serious? When I got here, you were talking nonsense! When you're done eating, I'll go with you to the hospital."

Gu Mingxi asked hesitantly, "I was talking nonsense? What did I say?"

"Not telling." Pang Qian crossed her arms and laid down on the table, giggling as she look at him.

Pang Qian accompanied Gu Mingxi to the hospital, and unsurprisingly, his body was inflamed. The doctor gave him an IV drip.

When the nurse came to insert the needle to his neck, he frowned. Pang Qian quickly pressed down on his shoulders.

After his infusion was done, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went home. With regards to lunch, it was a bit difficult for both of them. Gu Mingxi's house didn't have any cooked food and Pang Qian couldn't bear to see him bustling about



while he was sick. So in the end, Gu Mingxi finished the congee from the morning and Pang Qian boiled a few frozen dumplings.

After lunch, Pang Qian fed Gu Mingxi his medicine and had him go to sleep. Then she pulled out her laptop and was about to get to work in the living room. But in just half an hour of looking at her report, Gu Mingxi had come out three times. The first time was to use the bathroom. The second time was to drink water. And the third time, he walked over to Pang Qian and looked at her laptop. “Pang Pang, you got here in the middle of the night and you woke up really early. Aren’t you sleepy?”

Pang Qian quickly shut her laptop and stood up. “Okay, I’ll sleep with you. Happy?”

Gu Mingxi silently smiled.

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This was the first time that the two of them slept in the same bed.

Gu Mingxi didn’t let Pang Qian sleep in Dou Dou’s bed, because ‘It had been a long time since the sheets were changed so it was too dirty.’

They slept on Gu Mingxi’s bed, and Pang Qian really was a bit sleepy. She closed her eyes, half awake and half asleep. Then she felt a hot body moving closer to her.

He had a fever so his whole body was hot. Pang Qian unconsciously moved away a bit and turned her back to him. Still, he moved closer to her, his wide chest resting against her back.

His light breathing landed on her shoulders. His legs entangled with hers, his toe nail stroking her calf. Afraid that he would hurt her, he was extremely gentle.

Pang Qian helplessly opened her eyes, but she didn’t turn back. She said, “Stop messing around. You have a fever, go to sleep.”

The two of them laid there, side by side, his shoulders more broad than hers. After hearing her words, he nudged her back with his right shoulder. Hoarsely, he said, “Pang Pang, I want you to hug me to sleep.”

Without any hesitation, she immediately turned around and embraced him.



His frighteningly hot forehead rested between her shoulders. He wriggled around to find a comfortable position, and then he closed his eyes contentedly.

Ten minutes later, the heat from his body made Pang Qian start sweating. She touched Gu Mingxi's body and found it was the same for him. She wasn't sure if he was awake or asleep, but wanted to let go of him. Just as she loosened her arms, he unhappily said, "Don't let go, keep holding me."

"Aren't you hot?" Pang Qian was very helpless. "You're covered in sweat."

"I'm not hot." His eyes were still closed as he answered reluctantly, his body still stuck to hers.

She reached out her hand to touch his back again. Her fingers happened to move across his depressed spine. The skin on his back was taut and smooth, and also sticky— It was greasy and sweaty, but she actually found it rather sexy.

A strange thought suddenly popped into her mind. Pang Qian blinked her eyes, and then her fingers wandered across his body. Strong and lean waist, solid thighs, broad chest...

He kept enduring, even clenching his teeth, until her hands reached his crippled shoulders.

That was the most sensitive area on his body, the most fragile part of him. But she was very curious about them.

Her fingers brushed across the scar on his underarm, the protruding sensation causing Pang Qian's heart to beat chaotically. Gu Mingxi's heavy voice suddenly rang in her ear, "Pang Pang, if you don't pull your hands back, you'll have to take responsibility for the consequences."

Of course she understood the meaning behind his words, but not only didn't she move her hands away, she reached down to that spot. Defiantly, she responded, "You still have this thought when you're so sick?"

Oh... He suddenly opened his eyes, flames burning in his eyes. He said, "Don't say I didn't warn you later."

And then he stepped onto the bed with his feet and covered his with his body...

After his kisses disoriented her, Pang Qian still had the sense to say, "You have



a cold! Don't give it to me!"

His heart dropped as he realized that this was indeed a problem. As he was about to stop and move away, she pulled him back to her.

She looked into his eyes and gently said, "It's okay. Worse comes to worse, I'll just get an infusion together with you."

He laughed lightly, and then suddenly became capricious.

Under her encouragement, he continued kissing her, an emotional and romantic kiss. His gentleness and affection made her turn to water.

.....

On Sunday morning, Dou Dou's mother dropped him off at Gu Mingxi's house. Dou Dou's mother saw two sick people with different symptoms. One had a fever and one had a simple cold.

"Teacher Gu, are you and Auntie Crab sick?" Dou Dou laid down on Gu Mingxi's legs and asked him with concern. Pang Qian sneezed. After she wiped her nose, she put on a face mask and told Dou Dou, "Dou Dou, don't get too close to Teacher Gu to talk. Right now, he's a big walking virus. Be careful or else you'll catch his cold."

"I'm not scared," Dou Dou said. "When Teacher Gu got sick in the past, he didn't give it to me."

He looked curiously at Gu Mingxi and then asked, "Teacher Gu, did you give your cold to Auntie Crab so that she'd be sick too?"

Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian silently. His cheeks reddened slightly and he smiled.

In the past three days and two nights, his and her relationship had already changed. They'd become more familiar, more intimate, more attached.

He remembered when she snuggled up against his chest and told him, "There's a poem you must have heard before. 'Across the expanse of life and of death, I made a promise to her. With fingers entwined, we will grow old together.'"

She put her palm onto his left chest, over his hot skin and his pounding heart. She raised her eyes to him, and said quietly, "Gu Mingxi, I want to change that a



little. This is our promise— With hearts entwined, we will grow old together.”

— My Mister Ostrich —

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# Chapter 102

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 102 Will of the Heavens

*Make sure to take advantage of your three years of school to give birth.*

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After Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went for the last round of infusions, she sent him home, and they had a meal with Dou Dou and his mother. Then Pang Qian got ready to head to the airport.

Gu Mingxi had already gotten a lot better from his cold. He walked Pang Qian out to catch a taxi, and the two of them took a walk down the street.

The February weather in Hainan was just delightful. As the sky darkened and the scorching sun was hidden away, the moonlight started to poke through and shyly look down at a pair of lovers.

Standing at the intersection waiting for a taxi, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi shared a few sappy words. Then Pang Qian told him to make sure to take his medicine, drink lots of water, and get rest. Gu Mingxi smiled. As she was about to leave, Pang Qian suddenly said, “Oh yeah, what we talked about earlier, what did you end up deciding?”

Gu Mingxi naturally knew what she was talking about. She was asking about his intentions on going back to school. They hadn’t spoken about it in awhile because Pang Qian wanted to give Gu Mingxi a bit of time to think about it on his own. Gu Mingxi lowered his head and looked at Pang Qian. He said, “Pang Pang, have you really thought it over? Right now, your work is going well and you make good money. If you resign to go study, you’ll have to spend three or four years on that. Do you think it’s worth it?”

“Do you think it’s not worth it?” Pang Qian opened her eyes wide at him. Then she asked again, “Gu Mingxi, do you think it’s not worth it?”



“No, I don’t think that.” Compelled by her gaze, he slowly shook his head.

“I know that you have a dream,” Pang Qian said. “Whatever your reason is... Whether it’s to give yourself more opportunity for employment, whether it’s a promise you made to yourself, whether it’s to be an example to little kids, or even if it’s to make more money in the future, you and I both should go back to school.”

He was silent for a long time. Then he said, “I’m not sure I’ll be able to pull up my liberal arts subjects.”

Pang Qian smiled. “It’s okay. It’s been a long time since I’ve studied too. I have to get high scores for graduate school too. We’ll study together then. We can go to a prep academy if we have to.”

He smiled at how calm and unconcerned she was. “What if you get into the school but I don’t?”

Pang Qian didn’t think much about it and just said, “You can keep drawing and then review for the entrance exam the next year.”

Gu Mingxi frowned. “Are you saying that my educational background is poor?”

Pang Qian laughed and then swat at him. “If you really don’t want to go back to school, I won’t force you. But I know that you miss it too.”

Seeing Gu Mingxi’s pensive expression, she put her travel bag onto the ground and spread her arms to hug him. She said, “If I don’t get it, but you do, then I’ll just keep working to support your studied. If you don’t get it, but I do, then we’ll go by your opinion. You can keep trying at the exam or you can become a freelance illustrator to support my studies. In any case, we’ll just let things happen how they happen. Don’t force anything. Okay?”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

“The Mayans predict the world will end in 2012, Gu Mingxi. That’s next year. Let’s just do our best for now.”

“...”

She looked up at him. “Okay? We’ll go with your decision.”

He was never the type to make random promises, and he didn’t know how to



speak with flowery or insincere words. He was a man of his words. Looking at Pang Qian's expectant eyes, he knew that if he agreed now, he would have to work really hard for it during the next year.

But he was still a bit hesitant, and then Pang Qian said something that added the pressure. "Gu Mingxi, I've thought about it. Next year, when you get your acceptance letter, let's go register our marriage as a celebration, okay?"

Gu Mingxi started to think about that. Did that mean if he didn't get admitted next year, did that mean this wife would leave and go far away?

She was really something!

He clenched his teeth. "Okay, let's do it. We'll try the entrance exams again next year."

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In March, Pang Qian received the three documents for the house ownership as well as the house keys. She was extremely happy and went to take a look at the house. Then she called Gu Mingxi and asked him about the renovations. Gu Mingxi was a bit apologetic as he said, "Pang Pang, my royalties probably won't be in until August. I don't really have the money for renovations right now."

Pang Qian was taken aback. Then she called out, "Who asked you to pay for it?!"

They discussed for a bit and decided that they'd choose the furniture and lighting when Gu Mingxi came back. They'd start the interior, water, and electricity now. As for styling—Gu Mingxi didn't really have much opinion on it, so he told Pang Qian, "Just pick what you like."

Pang Qian found some time to talk to Zou Liwen. They decided to have a meal after work one day.

Zou Liwen graduated from Fudan University with a Masters in finance. Pang Qian spoke to him a bit about work and then she breached the topic of SHUFE and Fudan as choices for graduate school. She asked Zou Liwen which was easier to get into.

Zou Liwen was a very smart person, so he glanced at Pang Qian and asked, "What? Planning on going back to school?"



Pang Qian picked up her napkin and wiped her mouth. "Team Leader, I asked you out to dinner today because I wanted to talk to you about something. I decided to work until the end of June, or July at the latest, and then I'm going to spend half a year reviewing before challenging (the entrance exam) again."

She didn't try to hide her intention at all, and she didn't give Zou Liwen any space to try to hold her back. Truth be told, Zou Liwen understood Pang Qian very well. He wouldn't try to hold her back.

As he cut his steak, he gave her his opinions. "With regards to the exam difficulty, both schools are pretty much even. With regards to prestige, Fudan has more of it, though those in the industry hold SHUFE at a higher standard. You graduated from SHUFE, so it's a safer bet to go with it."

Pang Qian said, "Team Leader, you don't know, but I have a very special feeling towards Fudan."

Zou Liwen asked, "You didn't get in when you took the college entrance exams?"

"It would have been impossible to get into!" Pang Qian laughed. "But now, I actually feel that I'm a lot closer to Fudan."

"You did your undergraduate at SHUFE, and if you go to Fudan for grad school, you wouldn't ever have to worry about a job in the future. Moreover, you have more than four years of experience in the field." Zou Liwen couldn't help laughing. "Pang Qian, when I invite you back later, you might think I'm not good enough."

"How could that be, Team Leader!" Pang Qian flattered. "I made it this far because you were able to spot (this) pearl! Team Leader, don't worry! After I graduate, I'll come back to find you. If you're eating meat, I'll eat meat. If you're eating porridge, I'll eat porridge..."

"Alright, that's enough..." Zou Liwen's ego had already been blown up. "How are you and your boyfriend now?"

Pang Qian smiled shyly. "Pretty good."

"Are you planning on getting married?"



“Mm, next year. We’ve already bought a house. Since he decided to go back to school, we agreed on getting married after the entrance exams next year.” Pang Qian took a sip from her water bottle.

Zou Liwen spoke with complete seriousness, “Make sure to take advantage of your three years of school to give birth.”

“Pu—” Pang Qian spit out all her water.

Over the short Qingming break, Gu Mingxi left Dou Dou in the care of Teachers Ji and Chen for two days. Then he went to visit Z City with Pang Qian.

They met up at S City’s airport. Pang Qian arrived first, and after waiting two hours at the terminal, Gu Mingxi walked out with his backpack.

It had been more than a month since they’d last seen each other, so they missed each other very much. After they saw each other, they quickly turned into a pair of conjoined twins, sticking to each other constantly.

On the bus ride to Z City, Pang Qian pulled out her iPad and showed Gu Mingxi the renovations to their house. Usually when they would chat online, she would show him a bit, but this time, she’d taken photos of every little corner and detail of their new house. She swiped past each for him to see.

“I had the stove, sink, and counters in the kitchen lowered a bit so that it would be easier for you.” Pang Qian said with pride. Gu Mingxi curled his lips, “What you’re saying is that in the future, you’re not going to touch anything in the kitchen?”

Pang Qian’s face reddened. “No, that’s not it. I’m short, so I can use it all too.”

Gu Mingxi smiled and bumped her forehead with his. “I’m just kidding. I’ll take care of the cooking in the future. I like watching you eat the food I make.”

Pang Qian was elated as she continued showing him the photos. “This room faces south, and I was planning to leave it for your studio. We can get a custom desk and bookcases, okay?”

Gu Mingxi looked down at it for awhile. Then he said, “I was planning on leaving this room for the baby.”

“There’s another room for the baby. It’s about the same size too.”



He bit his lip and then said, "Okay. If the baby grows up and wants a room with more light, we can switch then."

Pang Qian knew better than anyone else what Gu Mingxi liked. That's why he was so at ease letting her take care of the designing. Pang Qian said she was intending on painting the walls in the master bedroom light beige, with dark floorboards, to give a warm feeling. The living room would be light blue with light pine floors, to give a cool tone. "If it's not warm enough, we can add some lighting." Pang Qian showed Gu Mingxi the living room ceiling. "It's wavy, like the ocean. We can add some LEDs. What do you think?"

Gu Mingxi nodded and said quietly, "Pang Pang, is this really our house?"

"Of course!" Pang Qian laughed happily. "But I don't know if we'll have a son or a daughter, so I don't want to paint the walls pink yet."

Gu Mingxi asked, "You want a daughter?"

"Yeah, daughters are more considerate." Pang Qian rested her head on his shoulder and asked, "What about you? Do you want a son or a daughter?"

"I want a son," Gu Mingxi said.

"..." Pang Qian felt a bit conflicted. She thought he would say either a son or daughter would both be good. She couldn't help asking, "Why?"

Gu Mingxi responded very sincerely. "Two reasons. First, I'm afraid that I'll spoil her too much if she's a girl. Second... I don't know if you've ever heard this saying, that when a parent raises their kids, it's like they get to experience their youth again. In particular, the things the parents never got to do, they'll let their kids experience it in their stead. I think that there's some reason to this saying. For example, I want to have a son, to love him, to be there for him, to teach him well, and... To praise him. I want to raise him to be a good boy. Kind, impressive, responsible, motivated. The things that I was unable to do well, I want him to be able to do them."

Pang Qian was extremely touched. She hugged him tightly and said, "You're already good enough, Gu Mingxi. Really."

When the coach bus arrived in Z City, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got a taxi to the cemetery.



There were a lot of people at the cemetery during Qingming. Gu Mingxi found Li Han's gravestone. There were some candles left in front of the tombstone, likely left by Li Chun or Li Mu. Pang Qian put down her flowers and, according to custom, she lit incense and burned paper money for Li Han.

Gu Mingxi stood beside her, quietly watching.

Pang Qian lit six incense sticks and knelt down in front of Li Han's headstone. She looked at the picture of Li Han on the stone. It was from when Li Han was about 40 years old. She was very pretty, her hair braided and sitting on her chest. Her eyes were clear and bright, and she had a warm and tranquil smile on her face.

Pang Qian kowtowed three times for Li Han and placed the incense sticks into the ground. Then she said, "Auntie, it's me, Qian Qian. I've come to visit you. Gu Mingxi and I are together now. Don't worry, I won't let him be alone ever again."

She stood up and Gu Mingxi walked to the tombstone. He slowly knelt down. Just as he started to say, "Mom..." he started choking up.

Pang Qian stood beside him and quickly wrapped her arms around him. She knew that Gu Mingxi must have suffered all these years, even if he didn't tell her about it. But now, facing Li Han like this, he must have thought about their days and nights together. No matter how strong he was, he was just a person. And he was disabled, more vulnerable than those who were all healthy. Every minute and second of his life, he was faced with difficulties. Pang Qian would sometimes think about it carefully, but then she wouldn't dare to keep thinking about it. Li Han had passed away nearly five years ago. Five years! Gu Mingxi had been alone for all that time.

Because everything was alright now, Pang Qian understood Gu Mingxi's changing mood even more. She quickly knelt down beside him and held his shaking shoulders. She whispered into his ear, "It's okay, it's okay. Auntie will worry if she sees you crying. Everything's okay now. Don't cry..."

The cemetery was filled with ash and smoke. There were incense and candles lit all around. The spring wind blew and the pine trees rustled.

Pang Qian held tightly onto Gu Mingxi, and then she lifted her head to the sky. "Alright, it's just the two of us anyway. If you want to cry, go ahead. To be



honest, I think Auntie would laugh at you. You brought your girlfriend to see her and then you cry like this.”

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After they left the cemetery, Gu Mingxi gave Li Chun a call.

The year that Li Han died, Gu Mingxi had fought a lot with her family. That’s because he’d insisted on selling their house to pay back everyone who had given them money, but Li Mu didn’t understand. Li Mu felt that the money given to them for Li Han’s illness didn’t need to be repaid. That was the convention. He hoped that Gu Mingxi wouldn’t sell the house and would just rent out a room. In the future, when Li Shiyu got older, they could borrow the house for his marriage. (Note: I’m not sure if this means using the house for the ceremony/festivities or if somehow the house would be ‘lent’ to Shiyu to live in.)

Gu Mingxi completely ignored his opinion on the matter, and with Xu Shuanghua and Shark’s help, he sold the house. Li Mu had said back then that he and Gu Mingxi would no longer have any relation in the future. If ever Gu Mingxi came to Z City, he wouldn’t be welcome to stay with him.

When Gu Mingxi left Z City, it was Li Chun who sent him off. Li Chun gave him 10 thousand dollars and told him not to return it. After that, he’d kept in touch with Li Chun. He would give her a call each time a holiday came around, and he would also send her 3 thousand dollars every year. He said it was for living expenses now that she’d gotten older. He also sent Li Chun a lot of things from Hainan.

Li Chun was very happy to receive Gu Mingxi’s call, and they spoke for a very long time. Gu Mingxi knew that his grandparents’ physical conditions were getting worse. Li Shiyu was getting married but their family didn’t have a house for him. So Li Mu sent their parents to a retirement home and rented a small place with Huang Lingli, leaving that three room house to Li Shiyu.

“Xiao Yu was spoiled too much by his parents,” Li Chun said. “His studies were bad, he won’t find work, and instead, he just spends all day playing games at the internet cafe. Then he met a girl through his games and they decided to get married. The girl’s a year older than him, but I heard she didn’t even graduate from high school. Usually she just works part time and then spends the day



playing games. When they're out of money, they just ask your uncle. It's a shame. He's already 50 years old, but he still needs to work as a night security guard. Ah..."

After they hung up the phone, Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Do you want to go see your uncle and grandparents?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head and said, "Pang Pang, I didn't grow up here. Do you understand?"

She thought for a moment and then nodded, "I understand."

They took the bus back to S City and decided to stay for the night and then fly out the next day.

That evening, Gu Mingxi brought Pang Qian to meet Xu Shuanghua.

Xu Shuanghua spent most of the year away from home. Even over the Spring Festival holidays, he would probably go to England to visit his son. But over Qingming, he would definitely be in S City.

Gu Mingxi contacted Xu Shuanghua ahead of time. When he arrived at his house, Gu Mingxi told Pang Qian, "This is where I spent half a year after my mom passed away."

The door opened and Xu Shuanghua seemed the same as always. Thin facial features and a blank, even expression. But when he saw Gu Mingxi, a trace of warmth was revealed on his face and he gave Gu Mingxi a hug.

It seemed that everyone knew this, that the most surefire way to warm Gu Mingxi's heart was to hug him when they met.

Gu Mingxi brought some Mingqian tea from E City for Xu Shuanghua. When he saw Pang Qian, he grew curious.

Gu Mingxi shyly introduced her, "Teacher, this is my girlfriend, Pang Qian."

Xu Shuanghua let them in for dinner. And after dinner, Pang Qian went to the living room to watch TV as Gu Mingxi and Xu Shuanghua went to his study to talk. Gu Mingxi wanted to consult his teacher about the college entrance exam situation.

As Xu Shuanghua listened to his plans, he wasn't surprised at all. He just



noded along and said, “Advancing your studies is not a bad plan. There’s no end to learning. I support you.”

Gu Mingxi said, “Teacher, this time I want to get into an art program.”

Xu Shuanghua asked, “Do you have an idea for which school you want to go to?”

“I want to go to Shanghai. Do you have any suggestions?”

“Shanghai?” Xu Shuanghua thought for a moment. “Have you heard of Fudan’s Shanghai Institute of Visual Art (SIVA)?”

Gu Mingxi nodded. “I looked at this school too.”

“My friend teaches there. The school’s not bad. If you want to continue teaching in the future, I suggest that you get into SIVA’s drawing program. With your foundations, if you work really hard for half a year, it shouldn’t be a problem. As for the liberal arts courses, you’ll have to count on yourself.”

Gu Mingxi nodded, “I got it.”

Xu Shuanghua asked Gu Mingxi what his current plans for the future were. Hearing that Gu Mingxi would return to E City in July, he immediately called up a friend in E City right there.

“I have a student who wants to take the exam for SIVA next year. He’ll be in E City from July... His residence is in E City. Right. I’d like to ask you to help tutor him. Don’t worry about his foundations. I hope that you can tutor him one on one. You have to guarantee that he’ll get into SIVA. ...Yes, that’s right. He’s my student, my fourth one.”

After he hung up, Xu Shuanghua added a phone number to Gu Mingxi’s phone. He said, “This professor specializes in tutoring people for the fine arts exam. His skills are very good. When you get back to E City, call me. I’ll head over to meet up with him with you. Don’t worry, he’s a pretty good person.”

Gu Mingxi and Xu Shuanghua left the study, both with smiles on their faces. Pang Qian stood up. Seeing the two young people, Xu Shuanghua said, “Mingxi, when are you getting married? You must invite me to the wedding. These few years, I’ve missed you more than I missed my son. Seeing that you’re doing well



now, I'm really especially happy."

He was a rather cold person, but hearing him say such moving words in that moment made Gu Mingxi especially touched. He moved close to Xu Shuanghua for an embrace. He said, "Teacher, thank you."

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian's hotel was in the middle of the city. When they got off the taxi, Gu Mingxi lifted his head to look around. Not so faraway, he saw a bridge.

Without saying anything to Pang Qian, he brought her over to the bridge for a walk.

Although it was nighttime, the bridge was still very lively. Vendors, entertainers, beggars, all lined up in a line. The tall buildings all around were lit up, and the neon signs on the tops of them shined brightly. The traffic under the bridge was like a trail of gold. The pedestrians walked past Gu Mingxi without taking so much as a glance at him. Occasionally, someone would notice his empty, swinging sleeves and the pretty girl beside him, and an inquisitive expression would appear on their face. Gu Mingxi didn't mind them and walked along slowly. Pang Qian didn't know what they were doing, but when she asked him, he didn't answer.

Everyone had some secrets and the current Gu Mingxi wasn't ready to tell Pang Qian about this bit of his past. He thought, perhaps after a few years, after they were married, on a cold winter day, as they sat inside their heated house watching TV, he would happily tell her about his story with this bridge.

When they got back to the hotel, they were both extremely tired. After a day of traveling, it was finally time to rest.

They closed the door and dropped their bags. Without even taking off her and his coats, she was already attached next to him.

She looked up at his face and he looked down, their lips tangling together.

She stumbled over to the washroom together with him. "Let's shower together..."

He simply couldn't bear letting go of her lips, so he just mumbled, "Mm."



Her voice was soft and sticky, as her hands traveled across his body. “Gu Mingxi, I missed you.”

“I missed you too.”

“How much?”

“When I’m awake, my head’s full of thoughts about you. When I’m asleep, all I dream about is you.”

“Me too, me too!” she moaned out. She even craftily used her tongue to tease his two tiger teeth. Pointy, sexy, and really interesting.

Her provocation made his kiss more frantic, hotter, stickier, leaving him unable to control himself. He kissed her deeply as his brows furrowed and he called her name over and over, “Pang Pang, Pang Pang...”

“I’m here,” she said.

As the night grew longer, they moved from the washroom to the white, soft bed, their two figures lingering, rising and falling.

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 103

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 103 Aged Examinee

*Pang Pang, you can just hold the umbrella for me from now on.*

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Ever since Gu Mingxi decided to once again take the college entrance exam next year at the ‘ripe old age’ of 28, Pang Qian asked Teacher Dai to help gather teaching materials, practice questions, and mock exams for high school seniors in E City for Gu Mingxi to review.

In his last semester in Sanya, Gu Mingxi was very busy. On one hand, he had to teach math and English to his graduating class. On the other hand, he also had to fulfill his publishing deadlines. And then on yet another hand, he had to review the high school liberal arts courses.

His colleagues knew that he was planning on retaking the college entrance exam, so they helped him to review. But when they picked up the math and science questions from the school, each of them became dumbfounded.

“It’s too hard. It’s been so many years since I’ve studied it, I’ve already forgotten all the formulas.” Teacher Chen shook his head. “If you told me to take the entrance exam again, I’d go mad.”

Teacher Song said, “Thank goodness Teacher Gu can draw, so he can take the arts exam. He ought to be able to get into an art program without any problems.”

Gu Mingxi sighed. “Actually, the exam tests you on sketching and color, which I haven’t practiced in a long time either. The exam is at the start of next year. Being able to bring my skills up to par in half a year will be difficult too.”

Ji Xiu’er comforted him, “You can do it. I believe in you.”

In June, the Sanya weather grew hotter and the rain came in greater force. The



sixth grade students were going to graduate.

Pang Qian had nearly taken care of all her work at Jialai. Zou Liwen turned a blind eye, and she quickly took her bags to Sanya to spend time with Gu Mingxi.

All of the graduating students at his school had been accepted to a junior high already. After their final exams, the school prepared a simple graduation ceremony for them. Pang Qian sat in the teacher's quarters, out of the sun, eating ice cream and watching the teachers and students gathering on the courtyard under the scorching sun to take a graduation photo.

The students in the first row crouched down, and the teachers sat in chairs behind them. In the third row, students were standing up, and behind them were students standing on chairs.

Pang Qian looked into the distance at Gu Mingxi. He was wearing a white collared shirt with beige pants. Pang Qian had helped him button his shirt, all the way up to the top. Gu Mingxi said that it looked more formal and official that way.

His hair was cut neatly and freshly and his clothes were clean and crisp. Sitting with the teachers between all the students, a light and gently smile remained on Gu Mingxi's face. He taught art for all the students, so he took photos with all four of the graduating classes. After photos were done, Pang Qian saw that a lot of kids were huddled around Gu Mingxi.

She curiously walked out and realized that they were crying. A lot of them were holding small trinkets, saying that it was a gift for their teacher because they'd heard he was leaving.

The gifts were handmade cards, notebooks and albums, pens and paint, and other such items. The most shocking gift was a basket of eggs, and the student said his parents had told him to give it to Teacher Gu.

Gu Mingxi couldn't bear to turn away the kids' kind intentions, so he asked Pang Qian to help him collect the gifts. He crouched down and a lot of girls surrounded him, crying and whispering to him.

More than anyone else, Pang Qian could understand their feelings. She'd known from a young age that Gu Mingxi was a very good teacher. He was strict



but not harsh, reasonable and filled with warmth. He was detailed and patient with his teaching, lively and interesting as well. He treated his students equally, encouraging them and also giving them criticisms. Most importantly, he didn't give up on any students. Even the biggest troublemakers would slowly get better under his concern and guidance.

Actions speak louder than words. Under Gu Mingxi's guidance, two classes of students' math and English scores were better than the other classes, so not only the students, but their parents also felt especially fond of the no-armed Teacher Xiao Gu.

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After the conclusion of the graduation ceremony, summer break started for the students. That evening, all the teachers packed up their things to head home. Usually at this time, Gu Mingxi also brought Dou Dou back to his house in Sanya Bay.

But this year, they would be parting. After Pang Qian came, she found that Dou Dou was utterly dejected, just like a frostbitten eggplant. The carefree summer vacation didn't bring him any excitement, and instead, he hoped the school semester would never end.

Pang Qian didn't try to talk to Dou Dou about it. One night after dinner, Gu Mingxi took Dou Dou out for a walk. They walked around for two hours, and when they returned, Dou Dou's eyes were swollen up like peaches. He ran over to Pang Qian, sobbing and sniffing. "Auntie Crab, in two days, I-I'm going to go to my mom's house. I-I'll pro-probably stay there for school. Auntie Crab, after you bring Teacher Gu home, you can't bully him. You promised me before that y-you would become his two hands."

Pang Qian was suddenly brought to tears by his words. She crouched down and hugged Dou Dou. "I definitely won't bully Teacher Gu. I promise. And Dou Dou, when you're on vacations, you can come to our house to play. When you grow up, you can go to university in E City, and then you'll be able to see Teacher Gu all the time.

Dou Dou cracked a smile, his mouth missing a few teeth. "Mm, Teacher Gu told me that."



Two days later, Dou Dou's mother came to Sanya to pick him up. Gu Mingxi packed up Dou Dou's things, his clothes and toys and study materials... Dou Dou would be settling in Guangdong, and Pang Qian wondered if his stepfather would be able to accept him. In any case, he would probably suffer a little bit, but there really was no other option.

When it was time for him to leave, Dou Dou cried his heart out. He nearly started to roll around on the ground in a fit. He couldn't hear anyone else's words, just holding onto Gu Mingxi's leg and crying out.

Gu Mingxi didn't know how Dou Dou's future would turn out either. He could only crouch down and make a promise with him.

"If you score 95 points or higher on your language, math, and English exams next semester, I'll come pick you up to visit E City for two weeks. I promise, I keep my word."

After being comforted for a long time, Dou Dou finally nodded as he continued crying. Eventually, he walked away and left Sanya to head home with his mother. Pang Qian wiped away her tears. When they could no longer see Dou Dou, Gu Mingxi walked over to her and kissed her on the forehead. He asked, "When I left before, did you cry like that too?"

Pang Qian looked at him with watery eyes and asked, "How did you know?"

He said, "I'm guessing."

"You left me twice," Pang Qian said. "Gu Mingxi, you can't let this happen again in the future."

He smiled, and his moist eyes were enough to appease her heart. "I promise, it won't happen again."

With Pang Qian's help, Gu Mingxi finished up the procedure to leave the school. He set up with the property manager to take care of the utility fees for his property. He cancelled his bank cards and used up his supermarket credits. When he was cancelling his phone line, it finally hit him that he was leaving Sanya.

Packing up was a lot easier this time around with Pang Qian's help. He didn't have much luggage to bring along. He had very few clothes and shoes, and most



of his belongings were books and paintings that filled up several boxes.

When she was helping him clear out the drawers, Pang Qian found a pen, dark blue, Hero brand. She pulled off the cap and saw that the tip was already broken.

“You still kept this? It’s already broken.” She laughed happily. “It’s been so many years, and you’ve run off so far away, but still, you didn’t lose this.”

Gu Mingxi sat down on the floor together with her. With his foot, he took the pen from her hand. He rubbed the pen gently and said, “Because of this pen, I scolded Dou Dou for the first and only time.”

Pang Qian’s eyes widened. “Ah?”

“Dou Dou’s the one who broke this pen.” He smiled. “When I saw him drop it, I couldn’t do anything to prevent it. I yelled at him and Dou Dou got really scared, so he cried for half the night. He was only 6 then. After that, I took him out to eat fried chicken and bought him a Transformers toy before he stopped ignoring me.”

Pang Qian couldn’t help laughing and Gu Mingxi shook his head helplessly. “Sometimes I really think that Dou Dou is just like you when you were younger. Likes eating and likes toys, not very petty and pretty good to comfort.”

Pang Qian pouted. “I’m not good to comfort now? (easy to placate)”

“Now, you’re... How could I say it.” He tilted his head, as if trying to weigh out his words. “You’re a bit greedy and insatiable.”

“Hey, Gu Mingxi! Do you know your idioms?!” Pang Qian called out angrily. “What do you mean ‘greedy and insatiably’?!”

“I mean...” He lowered his head and kissed her shoulder, biting gently. “In certain respects.”

Pang Qian mercilessly took a bite at his shoulder. Very satisfied with his cry of pain, she clenched her teeth and said, “Who’s the greedy and insatiable one? You’d better make it clear! Who’s the one who wants to study every night? Huh, who is it?!”

He closed his eyes and kissed her, as if he hadn’t heard anything.

Five minutes later, Pang Qian called out, “Gu Mingxi! We haven’t even finished



packing yet!”

“If you don’t like studying at night, we can work on it in the afternoon,” he said. “After we’re done studying, we can pack again.”

She felt hopeless, but also quite happy inside.

To be honest, she was really quite easy to placate.

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During the rainy season, the shining sun could disappear behind dark clouds in an instant. The gentle breeze turned devastating. After the sky darkened, large raindrops would drop from the sky. The tropical trees would shake in the wind.

Pang Qian stood by the window in her nightgown, and curiously opened the window. The whirring wind and rain blew in, soaking her clothes. She quickly closed the window, and stood there, arms crossed, staring out in a daze.

This was their last night in Sanya. They’d be heading back to E City the next afternoon.

Gu Mingxi walked up to her and bent down slightly, his chest against her back. His shoulders rested on hers as if embracing her.

“What are you looking at?” he asked.

“When the weather was like this and you were alone, how did you go out?” Pang Qian asked. “When it rains, who helps you hold the umbrella?”

He started, unsure of how to respond.

No one helped him hold an umbrella, and he’d gotten used to walking out into the wind and rain. Every rainy season during summer break, there would be the occasional typhoon. It was difficult for Gu Mingxi to go out, but he and Dou Dou still had to eat. If there was nothing to eat in the house, he just had to go out into the storm.

This was just a minor difficulty in his life, such that he didn’t even find it worth mentioning. Gu Mingxi whispered into Pang Qian’s ear, “Pang Pang, you can just hold the umbrella for me from now on.”

All the suffering had passed, and all the sorrow had turned into a gust of wind. Pang Qian understood what Gu Mingxi meant. He wasn’t the kind of person who



liked living in the past. It was just like his new book, 'The Lonely Whale,' which was a story about hopes and dreams. (Note: Such a plug, lol; this is the title of Ostrich's author's upcoming novel.)

Pang Qian looked out the window at the pouring rain and said, "I wonder if the rain will slow tomorrow. I'm worried it will affect the flight."

Next to her, Gu Mingxi said, "The weather report says there will be clear skies tomorrow."

The next day, it was indeed windy and sunny. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had shipped several boxes, and so they boarded the plane back to E City with minimal baggage.

This time, he was genuinely heading home. When they exited the plane, Pang Shuisheng was already waiting at the airport. He drove Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi back to the Prosperous North. They got out of the car and Pang Qian insisted on showing Gu Mingxi their new house.

The renovations on the house were complete, and only the furniture and some appliances were missing. Compared to when they first bought the house, it looked much more spacious, bright, and warm now.

Gu Mingxi followed Pang Qian to look through each of the rooms. He almost couldn't bear stepping onto the clean floors as he looked around the place with hungry eyes. Aluminum shuttered windows, bright yellow kitchen cabinets, a marble wall for the TV and entertainment area, white ceilings, a balcony filled with sun... and the bathroom that surprised him.

The bathroom was very spacious. There was a tall chair in front of the sink and counter, and also a bathtub and smart toilet. A towel bar was attached to the wall and the shower hooks were put it at waist level, obviously meant to be more convenient for Gu Mingxi.

He said, "Pang Pang, you don't have to accommodate me that much."

"It's not about *accommodating* you," Pang Qian said. "You're the owner of the house, so everything should be designed to be easy to use for you. This isn't a model house for showing to others." Pang Qian wrapped her arms around him. "I want you to live comfortably, and I hope that we'll be able to live here for a



long time because I really don't like moving house."

He thought for a moment and said, "Mm, I don't like moving house either."

She smiled. "My dad said that our task for the next half month is to go shopping for furniture and appliances, and that we don't have to do anything else. When we finish buying everything, we can start working hard."

It was July 6th, 2011. There was just half a year left before the fine arts exam and grad school entrance exam, and only eleven months before the college entrance exam.

The aged examinee Gu Mingxi let out a deep breath. Indeed, he would have to work as if his life depended on it.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 104

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 104 Victorious First Battle

*Who'd have thought that after I helped fight for an egg that year, that a chubby little girl was going to keep following me around.*

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After bringing Gu Mingxi's things into the guest bedroom of Pang Qian's house, Pang Qian took care of her resignation procedures and then became an unemployed vagrant.

Every day, she drove herself and Gu Mingxi to the furniture and appliance stores to pick out things for their new house. Every day, the delivery truck would come by and drop off something new, and Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi watched as their empty room filled up with a large bed, tables, dresser... In the hot summer, their house still didn't have air conditioning, so as they went around their house moving things around, their bodies became covered in sweat. And yet, they didn't feel like it was hot. They didn't feel tired, and they only felt a satisfying contentment.

When the mattress arrived, Pang Qian was extremely excited. She opened her arms wide and plopped down onto the bed. The gentle bed bounced back, and she enjoyed herself a bit before dragging Gu Mingxi down.

"Our house, our room, our bed." She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. "And my man."

He closed his eyes and felt the fragrance of her lips.

She suddenly said, "Gu Mingxi, let's get married."

His eyelids opened, revealing a pair of shining eyes. Who expected her to scrunch up her nose and shake her head. "No, no, we have take care of the entrance exams first."



Gu Mingxi, “...”

In order to buy some more things for their house, Pang Qian drove Gu Mingxi to the IKEA in Shanghai and they shopped around for the day, returning home with a small car stuffed to the max. Before they left, she invited Wu Feiyan, Yang Lu, and Xue Wenwen out to eat. She said she wanted to introduce her boyfriend to them, but only Wu Feiyan and Xue Wenwen showed up.

Her two roommates had previously heard that Pang Qian’s boyfriend was a bit special, but when they saw Gu Mingxi, they were still a bit startled. But they quickly adjusted their attitude and the group had a happy meal.

As they ate, Pang Qian complained, “I don’t often make it to Shanghai. Why didn’t Lu Lu show up?”

Wu Feiyan and Xue Wenwen exchanged a glance. Wu Feiyan told Pang Qian that Yang Lu and Sheng Feng had broken up.

“Why?” Pang Qian was taken by surprise. “Before I left, I had a meal with Lu Lu and Sheng Feng. They’d decided that after Sheng Feng finished his post grad, they were going to buy a house and get married. When I spoke to Lu Lu on the phone last year, they were still doing well. She told me that he was working at CITIC Bank and work was good too.”

“What else, it was because of the house.” Wu Feiyan sighed. “Sheng Feng’s house in E City is under his parents’ names. They prepared it earlier for his marriage, but it wasn’t very big. Lu Lu’s family said they ought to sell it and put a down payment on a newer and bigger house in Shanghai. Lu Lu’s family said they’d cover the cost of renovations and a new car, and then the two of them would cover the mortgage later on.”

Pang Qian said, “That doesn’t sound bad.”

Xue Wenwen said, “The problem is that Sheng Feng’s family didn’t agree to it. They said that even if the two were to buy a house in Shanghai, it would have to be under Sheng Feng’s name, and they wouldn’t let Lu Lu’s name be added on.”

“Ah?” Pang Qian asked, “What did Sheng Feng say?”

Wu Feiyan said, “The key to it all was Sheng Feng’s attitude. According to Lu Lu, he actually agreed with his parents. Lu Lu was extremely direct then, and she



said they should break up. After that, Sheng Feng finally seemed to come to his senses and chased after her and said he'd agree to put her name on the deed. But Lu Lu's feelings already went cold."

Pang Qian curled her lips, unable to say anything, feeling disappointed and frustrated.

Xue Wenwen, "Crab, you don't have to worry about Lu Lu. She already has a new boyfriend, an executive at a foreign investment firm or something. Lu Lu's work is going well too. When I went shopping with her, she seemed totally fine."

"How can she be totally fine?" Wu Feiyan said, "Look, Crab called her out to eat but she wouldn't come, because Crab would definitely ask about Sheng Feng. Lu Lu has to be feeling at least a bit hurt."

While the three girls talked, Gu Mingxi didn't interrupt. Instead, the two of them spoke about this topic in the car later.

Pang Qian said a bit regretfully, "Sheng Feng and Yang Lu dated for more than five years. Why didn't they have more confidence in each other? Wang Song and Xiaoyan didn't have this problem, and neither did we."

Gu Mingxi answered her evenly, "Pang Pang, actually, confidence is a rather extravagant word. Especially because they both also have parents and families behind them. The more people, the more talk. Everyone wants the best for their kids. When you date, you inevitably talk about marriage, and there are some things you just can't avoid. And when it comes to these things, there's nothing that is absolutely fair. The more you talk about it, the more likely someone's feelings get hurt."

Pang Qian asked, "Who do you think is right between Sheng Feng and Yang Lu?"

Gu Mingxi thought about it. "It doesn't matter who's right or wrong. But in my opinion, I always feel that a man should be a bit more generous. A woman doesn't marry a man because she covets his house. A woman just wants the house as a sort of guarantee."

Pang Qian smiled. "I suddenly feel like I'm very lucky."

"About what?" he turned to ask her.



“I seem to have picked up a treasure.” She giggled. “Gu Mingxi, you know, when we’re together, whether it’s in the past or now, I seem to have never worried about these troublesome things. When my mom first mentioned buying a house, I felt she was very meddlesome and I didn’t think it was something we had to worry about. I think that if I were Yang Lu, and I loved Sheng Feng enough, I would just tell him that we wouldn’t have to buy a house in E City. We’d just save money and buy a house in Shanghai. If we couldn’t buy one, we’d just rent. What’s the big deal.”

Gu Mingxi smiled and glanced at her without saying anything.

He thought to himself that actually, he was very fortunate as well. He’d also picked up a treasure.

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At the end of July, Xu Shuanghua arrived in E City and took Gu Mingxi to a studio. The studio was actually a training academy. The students lived on the campus and practiced there in preparation for a variety of fine arts exams.

The school’s principal was Xu Shuanghua’s good friend, a Mr. Ke, an experienced fine arts teacher who specialized in sketching. Teacher Ke also found teachers who taught color theory and sketch form. After Gu Mingxi made a quick sketch, several teachers examined it and agreed that there wouldn’t be a problem with getting into a program. But he would have to practice like his life depended on it.

And thus, Gu Mingxi started his studying life. Because of his physical condition, he didn’t have to live at the school. Every morning, Pang Qian drove him to the school to practice drawing, and then she would pick him up at night. In the evenings, he stayed at home and studied the high school cultural studies material.

Pang Qian enrolled in a training course for the graduate school entrance exam. She went to class every day, and then she studied with Gu Mingxi at night.

It had been a long time since either of them had been students, so at first, they weren’t accustomed to it. Especially Pang Qian. After less than half an hour of working on math problems, she laid down on her desk to sleep.

Gu Mingxi looked at her and shook his head. He’d let her sleep awhile before



waking her up. Pang Qian rubbed her eyes and said, “These math problems are much more annoying than the reports I have to write for work.”

Gu Mingxi couldn't help showing a sour expression. “Then try working on some physics problems.”

Pang Qian laughed happily, “Gu Mingxi, even you have such a day!”

They studied English together. After a certain time, they would compete to see who memorized the most, and the loser would be punished. If Pang Qian lost, she would have to give Gu Mingxi a massage. If Gu Mingxi lost, he would have to sing for Pang Qian.

Most of the time, Pang Qian lost, but she happily started massaging at his legs and back. Gu Mingxi hadn't practiced drawing to such a degree in a long time, and it was purely for the exam now. When he came home every day, his waist was sore, his legs hurt, and his muscles were stiff. Even his toes would get a bit numb. Pang Qian pulled his legs onto her thighs and started massaging each of his toes, one at a time.

“Do your feet cramp nowadays?” she asked him. “Don't lie!”

Gu Mingxi was quiet for a moment and then he nodded. “Sometimes, but what can you do about it.”

“Rest a bit after you draw for awhile.”

“The exam is timed. How can I just rest whenever I feel like it?” He smiled. “Pang Pang, it'll be over after awhile. I know my body best. You don't have to worry.”

Every night, they stayed at Pang Qian's house. Pang Qian sat at her desk and Gu Mingxi sat on a chair with a tea table in front of him. The room was very quiet, and there was only the rustling sound of pencil on paper. Sometimes Gu Mingxi would stop to rest awhile. He looked at Pang Qian's profile, cheek on her left hand, as she scribbled with her right hand. When she came across a difficult question, she bit the back of her pen and stared out. Then she flipped through the lesson material and continued.

She wore loose pajamas and her hair was braided messily. When the light shined on her bare face, Gu Mingxi saw her smooth neck and long eyelashes, her



raised nose, her slightly pouting lips. He'd seen this scene before.

It was just like all those years ago, when they studied together every day.

Pang Qian felt his stare and then turned to smile at him. She dropped her pen and walked over to him.

When her kiss landed on his lips and her arms wrapped around his neck, Gu Mingxi realized that she wasn't the same silly girl from the past.

That Qixi Festival would be Gu Mingxi's 27th birthday. He didn't want to go out to eat and volunteered to cook a meal for Pang Qian's parents. Jin Aihua was skeptical, but Pang Qian clutched her shoulder and said, "Mom, don't worry. He can do it."

Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi go out to buy groceries. They went to the supermarket and then the outdoor market. And lastly, they headed to the fish market. Gu Mingxi diligently picked out the ingredients as Pang Qian smiled at the side. So this son in law wanted to show off to his future parents in law.

While Gu Mingxi worked busily in the kitchen, Pang Qian helped him out. Jin Aihua was really concerned, so she secretly snuck over to take a look. She saw Gu Mingxi sitting on a chair with the cutting board on the ground. His head was lowered in concentration as he grabbed a knife and cut the ingredients. Jin Aihua nearly had a heart attack.

She scolded her daughter, "Qian Qian, why aren't you helping?! What if Mingxi cuts off his toe? You always said you were busy with work when I tried to teach you to cook. Now that you're jobless, you should learn it!"

Gu Mingxi laughed. "Auntie, it's okay, I can do it. I'd be more worried if Pang Pang were to do the cutting."

With Pang Qian's help, Gu Mingxi cooked up six dishes and a soup— Steamed crab, deep fried breaded shrimp, beef and onion stir fry, sausage with bamboo and soybeans, luffa and bamboo shoots, roasted eggplant, and tofu and tomato soup. Jin Aihua and Pang Shuisheng saw the dazzling menu on the table and were indeed startled. They knew what a poor cook their daughter was, which meant that this table of food was all cooked by Gu Mingxi.

Jin Aihua looked at the dishes on the table and asked, "Mingxi ah, did you cut



all of these?”

Gu Mingxi was a bit embarrassed. Pang Qian helped him untie his apron as he laughed shyly. “Auntie, I didn’t do that well. Don’t joke about it.”

“What’s not done well?!” Jin Aihua took a bite of the eggplant. The sauce was very fragrant. Then she took a bite of beef, smooth and tender. She couldn’t help praising him, “It’s delicious, even better than when Pang Qian’s dad cooks.”

Pang Shuisheng already had a bit of alcohol, so he frowned and said to Pang Qian, “Qian Qian, let me tell you. When you start your own family, you have to learn how to do some things too. You can’t just have Mingxi do it all on his own. Husband and wife have to share the household duties. When you’re together, you have to help each other and take care of each other. You can’t just throw a tantrum or bully him.” Then he spoke to Gu Mingxi. “And Mingxi, I have to tell you too. You spoil Qian Qian too much. You spoiled her in the past and even more so now. You’re a grown up man, you have to take the lead a bit.”

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi both nodded modestly. And then she whispered to him, “When my dad gets happy, he starts to drink. After he drinks a bit, he talks a lot. Don’t worry about it.”

Gu Mingxi whispered back in her ear. “Actually, I think that what Uncle said makes sense. It seems I’ve spoiled you too much.”

Pang Qian looked at him. “You regret it?”

“A bit.” He smiled. “Who’d have thought that after I helped fight for an egg that year, that a chubby little girl was going to keep following me around.”

A few months passed, and the days grew calm. During the [Double Ninth Festival](#) (Note: around October) of 2011, Jin Aihua’s company put on an event for their retired workers, which included a tea party at the tea house.

Jin Aihua dressed up prettily and went to the event. There, she ran into some old neighbors and colleagues. Everyone started chatting about their kids’ work, studies, and relationships.

Every year, Jin Aihua was the object of envy for the others because Pang Qian’s work was good, her income was high, and their family had moved into a big house.



Zhong Xiaolian once again lamented that she hadn't been brave enough at the start. After renting a place for three years, she was finally able to move back into the rebuilt apartments, and the houses were pretty much the same size as they had been originally. She always said to Jin Aihua, "Because Shuisheng was more bold, you guys are doing well now. Housing prices are so expensive now that we won't even have a house for our son when he gets married."

Jin Aihua was extremely proud. "It was Qian Qian's suggestion back then. She's pretty bright after all."

Zhong Xiaolian asked, "Does Qian Qian still work for that Hong Kong company?"

Jin Aihua didn't try to avoid the question, "She resigned and she's getting ready for graduate school."

"Aiyo, your Qian Qian is going back to school!" A group of old women cried out. "It's not good for a girl to study so much! Be careful, she might not be able to find a husband later!"

Jin Aihua said, "Quit your nonsense. Our Qian Qian already has a boyfriend! And they're getting married next year!"

The aunties all got excited. Like a swarm of bees, they started asking about his age, where he was from, what his job and income were, and most importantly, did he have a house.

Jin Aihua replied confidently, "The house is already settled. It's in our neighborhood, 138 sqm. He paid the down payment and put Qian Qian's name on the house."

The aunties were full of jealousy and envy. Zhong Xiaolian suddenly cried out, "Ah... Qian Qian's getting married soon. I wonder how Mingxi's doing."

Someone elbowed her and Jin Aihua looked away. She looked around at their surroundings with a cheerful heart.

As everyone dispersed, each of them reminded Jin Aihua to invite them to Pang Qian's wedding. Jin Aihua happily agreed. When she was about to leave, Zhong Xiaolian walked over to her.



She said quietly, "Aihua, did you hear, Gu Guoxiang got divorced."

Jin Aihua was taken aback and asked, "Divorced? With the current one?"

"Mm, the current one. It's already been half a year. Old Ma still works at the factory, so he told me about it. There were a lot of people earlier who didn't know, so I didn't mention it."

Jin Aihua asked, "Why are they getting divorced? Who gets the child?"

"Why else? When she married Gu Guoxiang, she was just 26. Now she's only 34, but what about Gu Guoxiang? He's nearly 55 years old! What kind of 30 year old woman would be willing to stay with an old man like him?" Zhong Xiaolian looked like she was retelling a dramatic movie. "Of course the child will stay with Gu Guoxiang. Didn't he divorce Li Han to have that kid after all? He's even giving the woman a pile of money to give up custody rights."

Jin Aihua wasn't sure how to respond. "Then he's going to take care of that kid by himself? How old is the kid?"

"8 years old, just in third grade." When they got to the topic of the kid, Zhong Xiaolian sighed. "You don't know, but Gu Guoxiang's spoiled the kid rotten. Old Ma said that whenever anyone at the factory hears about Gu Guoxiang's little princess, they all shake their heads. They say she's very capricious and unruly, she doesn't understand things and everything must go her way. When she's unhappy, she throws a fit. And her school results aren't very good. She just cares about looking at pretty clothes and shoes. She probably got that from her mother."

"..."

"They said that if you had to compare the little brat with Mingxi, one was obviously like the sky and the other was like dirt."

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Jin Aihua returned home with a lot on her mind. After dinner, she told Pang Qian to wash the dishes and sent Pang Shuisheng out to buy fruit. She took the chance to talk with Gu Mingxi.

Jin Aihua said, "Mingxi, did you know that your dad got divorced?"



Gu Mingxi's expression remained unchanged, though he felt a pang of surprise inside.

He found an opportunity and gave Gu Guoxiang a call. Pretending as if he didn't know anything, he told his father that he'd already returned to E City and that he was currently studying with plans to go back to school.

Gu Guoxiang didn't speak about his own situation the entire time. He asked, "Mingxi, where are you staying?"

Gu Mingxi told him the truth. "I'm staying at Pang Qian's house."

"Ah!" Gu Guoxiang was a bit unhappy. "What's this mean! If someone finds out about this, they'll start to gossip! It's not like you don't have family! Mingxi, you can stay with me."

Gu Mingxi rejected the offer. "Dad, it's okay. Living at Pang Qian's house is pretty good."

Gu Guoxiang was silent for a moment and then he said, "When should we have a meal together? It's been a long time since you've seen your sister."

Gu Mingxi had only seen Gu Ziyue once before. He didn't even remember what she looked like. He said, "Dad, we'll talk about it when New Year's comes. I'm busy with revision lately, and there's an exam in two months. After the exam, at New Year's, I'll have more time."

"Okay." Gu Guoxiang didn't push him more. "Let's keep in touch, Mingxi. Take care of yourself."

Gu Mingxi nodded. "I know, Dad. You take care of your health too."

In December, Gu Mingxi successfully registered for the entrance exam. The fine arts exam took place the next January.

He prepared well for it. As he carried his supplies and drawing board through the door, Pang Qian gave him a hug and said, "Gu Mingxi, you can do it! I'll be waiting for the good news outside!"

Although the examinees around him were nearly ten years younger than himself, Gu Mingxi's eyes shined confidently. He said, "Pang Pang, I won't disappoint you."



January was pretty much exam month. Not only did Gu Mingxi participate in the national exam, he also partook in two school exams. One of them was for SIVA. Xu Shuanghua said that he'd already looked into it, and as long as Gu Mingxi's scores for the practical and the cultural exam reached the cutoff, he wouldn't have to worry about SIVA rejecting him because of his disability. His words cleared Gu Mingxi of all his worries. During the exam, he was calm and focused as his feet changed brushes, washed them, added color... His painting was very simple, but it may have been the most important painting of his life.

After the exam, he put down his brush. His legs felt a bit sore, but he felt very light inside.

Pang Qian also took part in the first round for the graduate entrance exams, and she did very well. Her English foundation had always been pretty decent, so after her dedicated studying and practicing, she felt great walking out from the exam. All that was left was to wait for the results at the end of the year.

When she walked out of the exam, she saw Gu Mingxi waiting. He stood under a large tree on the side of the road. When he saw Pang Qian, he walked over to her.

He didn't ask her how the exam went, and instead just kissed her forehead. He said, "Now that you're done, let's have a meal to celebrate, okay?"

"Okay!" She wrapped her arms around his waist and looked at him happily.

The first report of good news came to Gu Mingxi.

The exam scores were made public, and he'd successfully scored above the cutoff for undergraduate schools. He also passed the cutoff for SIVA. That meant that for the next few months, he just had to focus on his cultural studies.

The Spring Festival of 2012 was especially meaningful to Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, because that was when they moved into their new house.

Although they hadn't gotten married yet, Jin Aihua knew that Gu Mingxi had a lot inconveniences in his life, so she agreed to let Pang Qian live together with him.

When their relatives came to visit for New Year's, they also stopped by to take a look at the new house. One after another, they were blown away. In the next



half year, Pang Qian's family all accepted Gu Mingxi. No one called him into question because other than him not having arms, this guy pretty much had it all. He was handsome, genuine, and knew how to make money. He left a good impression and he was a good cook. And of course, he treated Pang Qian better than words could express.

But there were still some who didn't quite understand Gu Mingxi's family background. They would ask Jin Aihua, "Why doesn't Mingxi go home for New Year's? What about his parents?"

At this time, Gu Mingxi received a call from Gu Guoxiang, asking him to dinner.

"Your grandparents miss you," Gu Guoxiang said. "Bring Qian Qian, and come visit them."

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 105

– My Mister Ostrich –

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## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 105 | The Gu Family

*We don't have one. Houses are really expensive right now, so how could we buy one.*

Gu Guoxiang organized for their family dinner to be at a seafood restaurant. Before their appointment, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi went to buy some gifts.

Pang Qian's memories of Gu Mingxi's grandparents and aunt were frozen from the day of his 16th birthday. That meal wasn't exactly a joyous one, and it left an impression on Pang Qian, that his family treated him with such contempt.

At the mall, Gu Mingxi left the gift choices to Pang Qian. She picked out a sheepskin hat for Grandpa Gu and a wool shawl for Grandma Gu. Then she picked out a red wine set for Gu Guoying and her husband, and since she'd heard that Dong Yuan had just gotten married, she also picked out a pair of gold pendants for the new couple. Lastly, she discussed with Gu Mingxi and chose a pair of high grade thermal underwear for Gu Guoxiang and a down coat for Gu Ziyue.

They were the younger generation. Although it had been many years since they'd been in contact with the relatives, and they likely weren't going to see them often in the future, the two thought they should at least do them this courtesy. After they finished buying the gifts, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi hurried over to the restaurant. Carrying the bags, Pang Qian went up the elevator with Gu Mingxi, and there, they ran into Dong Yuan and his wife.

If they'd crossed paths on the street, Pang Qian definitely wouldn't have recognized Dong Yuan. 27 year old Dong Yuan wasn't very tall, and he looked to be at least 100kg. His hair was cut short and his face had a lot of acne. He stood there holding his wife's hand.

Dong Yuan didn't recognize Pang Qian either. He looked her up and down and



then turned his head away. That was the typical gaze of a person who saw a beautiful woman on the street. They wanted to look, but they pretended like they weren't looking. Pang Qian, who was originally about to greet him, stopped in that instant.

In the end, it was Gu Mingxi who called out, "Dong Yuan."

Dong Yuan was extremely surprised to see Gu Mingxi. He hadn't expected that Gu Guoxiang had contacted Gu Mingxi and even called him over for dinner. Seeing Pang Qian beside Gu Mingxi, he was even more surprised. Firstly, because the beautiful woman standing there was actually that silly girl who used to stick to Gu Mingxi. Secondly, because that beautiful woman had become Gu Mingxi's girlfriend!

Dong Yuan looked over Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian. Pang Qian was wearing makeup and a pretty dress. Gu Mingxi's clothes were very simple, a grey coat and black pants. He seemed to have gotten a bit taller. His skin was a bit tan, but his face was still pretty handsome. Dong Yuan's eyes fell onto Gu Mingxi's coat sleeves. Just as in his memories, his empty sleeves hung straight down, and there was nothing poking out of his cuffs.

Dong Yuan's wife, Xiao Liang, had a medium build and a familiar kind of face. She kept looking over Gu Mingxi curiously. Dong Yuan introduced her. "This is my older cousin, Gu Mingxi, Gu Ziyue's half brother."

The four of them rode the elevator up. When they exited the elevator, Dong Yuan lit a smoke and held out the box to Gu Mingxi. "Want one?"

Gu Mingxi shook his head. "I don't smoke, thanks."

Dong Yuan squinted at him a bit, and then asked, "Uncle said that you'd been studying in Z City all this time. Is it true? When did you get back?"

Gu Mingxi didn't want to talk about his past, so he just answered, "I got back a few months ago."

"I heard that your mom passed away?"

Gu Mingxi nodded.

"Are you staying in E City from now on?"



“Yeah.”

“Have you found a job?” Dong Yuan asked. “Where have you been staying these days?”

Gu Mingxi didn’t lie at all. “I haven’t found a job yet. I’ve been staying at Pang Qian’s house since I got back.”

Dong Yuan nodded. “Indeed, it would be hard to find a job with your situation. I’m working at a supermarket right now, in the warehouse. Our supermarket has a few disabled people. A few of the stockers are mute or deaf. There’s one in the warehouse too. I can go back and ask about it for you, if our supermarket has a job for someone in your situation.”

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, “That’s okay. I’m not planning on working for awhile.”

Dong Yuan was startled and asked, “Are you planning on having Pang Qian raise you?”

Pang Qian wasn’t about to bicker with him, so she just laughed and said, “That’s not okay? I’m willing to! I’m happy to!”

Hearing her words, a strange expression crossed Dong Yuan’s eyes. Pang Qian saw it very clearly. In his eyes, there was pity, sympathy, and even a bit of contempt.

Indeed. Dong Yuan said, “Gu Mingxi, sounds like you came back at a great time. Uncle divorced last year, so you can take advantage of the fact that he’s not married and Ziyue’s still young, to try to win some things.”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

Pang Qian’s complexion darkened.

When they walked into the private room, the Gu grandparents, Gu Guoying and her husband, and Gu Guoxiang and Gu Ziyue were already present. Gu Guoxiang saw Gu Mingxi and quickly welcomed him. His expression was buried deep, but his eyes revealed a repressed joy. Standing before Gu Mingxi, he hesitated before finally patting his son’s shoulders. “Mingxi, you’re here.”

“Dad, Happy New Year,” Gu Mingxi called out. His attention landed on the



little girl beside Gu Guoxiang. She was very pretty, tall with fair skin, wearing a red plaid dress. Her facial features looked more like Gu Guoxiang's than even Gu Mingxi's did. She had shoulder length hair and wore a butterfly clip. Her eyes looked over Gu Mingxi.

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "Is this Ziyue? She's grown so much." He turned to Pang Qian and said, "Pang Pang, bring the gifts over. We bought Ziyue some clothes, but I'm not sure if they'll fit."

Gu Guoxiang didn't mention Fang Hui, and Gu Mingxi didn't ask about her.

Pang Qian brought the presents over and handed them out to the elders, one after another. Gu Mingxi stood beside her. "Grandpa, Grandma. Auntie, Uncle." Grandpa and Grandma Gu were already more than 80 years old, but they were still quite healthy. When Grandma Gu saw Gu Mingxi, tears flowed from her eyes. Grandpa Gu's gaze was a bit complicated. After he asked about Gu Mingxi, he closed his eyes.

Gu Guoying looked subtly at Gu Mingxi, and even whispered something to her husband.

When Xiao Liang received a wedding present, she was clearly very happy. She stood up and said, "Thank you Cousin (and Cousin's Wife). But I didn't know you two were coming, so I didn't prepare anything."

Pang Qian laughed and said, "It's okay. And don't call me Cousin's Wife. We still haven't married yet."

Xiao Liang also laughed. "It'll happen eventually. Remember to invite us to the wedding."

Before Pang Qian could respond, Gu Guoying laughed insincerely from the side. "What's the use in saying that. When our Yuan Yuan got married, Mingxi didn't bother to grace us with his presence at the wedding."

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian looked at each other, chuckled, and walked on.

Before they'd arrived, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian came up with a simple method of communicating. They agreed to talk less and laugh more during dinner. No matter what anyone said, they'd laugh a bit and move on.



Pang Qian had thought about this before. Gu Mingxi's family hadn't seen him in so many years and only knew a tad bit about his current situation. When they met again, how would they act? She'd even thought about those dramatic reunion scenes where everyone breaks into tears, like they show on TV. But the reality wasn't like that. Those people didn't ask about Li Han and they didn't ask about how Gu Mingxi had been living the past years. Other than Gu Guoxiang and Xiao Liang, those people looked at Gu Mingxi with strange eyes, as if facing a foreign invader. Pang Qian realized that Gu Mingxi's family seemed to have some misunderstanding after the two of them suddenly dropped back into their world.

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Pang Qian handed over presents to Gu Guoxiang and Gu Ziyue. Previously, Gu Guoxiang had already told Gu Ziyue that this man she'd never seen before was actually her brother.

Pang Qian handed the new clothes to Gu Ziyue, who glanced at it and then tossed it to the side. She looked at Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi with obvious hostility.

Gu Guoxiang saw this and scowled. He told her, "Ziyue, what do you mean by this? This is your older brother. He brought you a gift. What should you say?"

Gu Ziyue pretended as if she didn't hear and scurried over to her grandfather. Gu Guoxiang grabbed her and said, "Ziyue, say thank you to your brother!"

Gu Ziyue glared angrily at him and then clenched her teeth.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian didn't know what to think. After Gu Guoxiang reprimanded Gu Ziyue once more, the little girl's eyes reddened and tears flowed down from her eyes. Gu Guoying walked over to pull her away and kept coaxing her, "Be good, darling. Yue Yue. Princess Ziyue," over and over. Gu Ziyue finally stopped crying and looked at Gu Mingxi. She said to Gu Guoying, "Auntie, my mom said that I had a crippled brother who didn't have arms. Is it because of him that my parents got divorced?"

A 'boom' went off in Pang Qian's mind. She felt as if all the blood in her body had rushed to her head. She couldn't stand that someone had called Gu Mingxi 'crippled' right in front of her face. Especially since that person was his own flesh and blood, his sister! Pang Qian couldn't help herself from stepping forward, but



Gu Mingxi stepped in to block her path.

He pushed against her with his shoulder and spoke in a low voice. “Pang Pang, forget it. She’s still a kid.”

Pang Qian’s expression was sour from how angry she was. Gu Mingxi tried to placate her again. “Pang Pang, I’m fine. Calm down.”

No one else stepped in to reprimand Gu Ziyue. After Gu Guoxiang chided her with a few more words, Gu Ziyue looked like she was about to cry again. Grandpa Gu looked at Gu Guoxiang and said, “It’s the New Year, what are you yelling at the child about?”

With these circumstances, what could Pang Qian say. To all these people, Gu Mingxi was like a stranger, and Pang Qian was even more so.

She helped Gu Mingxi take his coat off and the two of them sat down. She helped him clean his feet with a wet towel, and she repeated to herself that they were just here to eat a meal. When the meal was over, they could leave, and then they wouldn’t see these people often after that.

Gu Ziyue kept observing Gu Mingxi who ate with his feet. As she watched, her eyebrows furrowed. She realized that Gu Mingxi couldn’t grab the food himself from the dishes, and Pang Qian was helping him. Then an idea sprouted in her head.

After that, Pang Qian realized that when she went to grab some food, the glass turn table started to turn quickly. Sometimes Pang Qian would be in the middle of grabbing the food when the dishes suddenly moved away. In a difficult situation, she could only pull back with her chopsticks in the air.

Pang Qian looked over at Gu Ziyue, who looked to be very happy. Her hand was always at the turn table, spinning away, just like she was playing a game. It was hard for others to get food as well. Gu Guoxiang finally realized what was happening. After he spoke to her, she would stop for a bit, but soon after, she started up again.

When they were eating, they also had to talk. Gu Guoying asked Gu Mingxi about work and Gu Mingxi said he wasn’t currently working. Gu Guoying recalled what Gu Guoxiang had once told her— that Gu Mingxi had quit school.



Gu Guoying said to Gu Mingxi, "It's hard to find work now. Our Yuan Yuan graduated college, but he still had to count on his dad's connections to get a job at the supermarket. Mingxi, for someone with no arms or educational background like yourself, it's impossible to find a job."

Gu Guoxiang asked, "Mingxi, didn't you mention that you wanted to go back to school before?"

"Yeah, I'm taking the college entrance exam." Gu Mingxi explained everything very simply. "I'll get a job after I get my diploma."

Dong Yuan chipped in. "How many years will that take? Are you going to a prep school or are you studying on your own?"

Gu Mingxi smiled but didn't respond.

Gu Guoxiang pondered a moment and then said, "Mingxi, don't force yourself when it comes to school. It's best if you can get your degree, but it's okay if you can't. If you want to work, I can help you arrange something. Find some work in an office, something simple and easy. Something that would suit you."

Gu Mingxi laughed again and said, "Dad, it's okay. I want to go back to school."

Since Gu Mingxi used the Mister Ostrich pen name when he published his books, Gu Guoxiang didn't know about it. And neither Gu Mingxi nor Pang Qian had any intention to tell him. They'd already set their plans. While they were studying, Gu Mingxi could continue to draw after classes. With his current popularity, if he released just one book a year, the two of them would still be able to live comfortably.

Gu Guoying was very interested in Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian dating. In her eyes, Gu Mingxi was a disabled person without education or work, and thus without a house or money. Pang Qian was such a pretty girl, so why would she date him? What was her plan?

She asked quietly, "Mingxi, Qian Qian, how long have you two been dating?"

Gu Mingxi glanced at Pang Qian, and then he answered, "A bit more than a year."



“For that long already? Are you planning on getting married?”

“Mm, we are.” Gu Mingxi nodded and smiled a bit. Pang Qian added on, “We’re going to get married this year.”

Gu Guoying asked, “That... What about the house for your marriage?”

Gu Mingxi was about to answer when Pang Qian’s hand suddenly reached under the table to press on his leg. She smiled and said, “We don’t have one. Houses are really expensive right now, so how could we buy one.”

Gu Mingxi gave her a curious look. Pang Qian stared at him and blinked her eyes. She said, “My dad said that our house is big, so we can use it when we get married.”

Gu Guoying’s husband, Dong Ping, asked, “Then are your parents going to rent a place somewhere else?”

“Of course not,” Pang Qian replied with surprised. “Naturally, they’ll live together with us. In any case, the house has a lot of rooms. When we have a child, there will still be room too.”

Dong Ping said, “That means Mingxi will be joining his wife’s family?”

Gu Guoying pat his arm. “What do you mean joining? When they have a child, they’ll surely keep the Gu name.”

“Not necessarily.” The speaker was actually Gu Mingxi, which caused Pang Qian to jump in place.

Gu Mingxi said, “Whether the child’s name is Gu or Pang, I don’t mind.”

“Nonsense!” Grandpa Gu hadn’t spoken before, but he’d been listening to everyone’s words. This time, he couldn’t hold back as he slammed his hand down on the table. “The children of the sons of the Gu family will have the name Gu! How can you name your children recklessly?! I definitely won’t agree to it!”

Pang Qian laughed grimly and picked up her teacup to drink a bit.

Gu Guoxiang’s expression became awkward and he finally spoke firmly to Gu Mingxi. “Mingxi, if you and Pang Qian need a house for your marriage, you can tell me. I can help a little.”



Gu Guoying quickly called out, “Brother! You still have Ziyue!”

All these years, Gu Guoying had benefitted a lot from Gu Guoxiang. Fang Hui was rarely home, so when Gu Guoxiang was busy with work, Gu Guoying stayed around with the nanny. The little girl looked down on the nanny, and her naughty tricks left the nanny in tears. After that, since Gu Guoying was retired and Dong Yuan didn’t have a child yet, he hired Gu Guoying to take care of Gu Ziyue’s daily needs.

Gu Guoying wasn’t a nanny though. When she went to Gu Guoxiang’s house, she wasn’t treated like an outsider. The metals company was successful so they would send lots of things to his house. When Gu Guoying saw this, she would pack it up and take it home, and Gu Guoxiang wouldn’t say anything either.

The sister and brother pair both spoiled Gu Ziyue greatly. She was given whatever she wanted. Whenever the little girl started making a ruckus, Gu Guoying would ask Gu Guoxiang for some money to buy snacks, toys, clothes, take her out to eat, go to watch a movie, or to go play games. Sometimes, Gu Guoying would invite Dong Yuan and Xiao Liang along. Since her brother was paying for it, she didn’t worry about it.

And so, Gu Guoying was also very sensitive towards Gu Guoxiang’s assets. She’d rather her brother spend the money on Gu Ziyue and refused to allow any of the money to go to Gu Mingxi.

Gu Ziyue had already snuck over to Gu Guoying’s side, and Gu Guoying held her in her arms. She told Gu Guoxiang, “I can’t agree to that. Ziyue’s still young, and you’ll be retiring in a few years. Didn’t you say you were going to send Ziyue to study abroad? That needs money! Mingxi’s already a grown up. When Li Han left, you didn’t treat the two of them poorly. Gu Mingxi didn’t work for it himself. He didn’t finish school or get a job. Do you have to be responsible for that? When Ziyue’s mother left, I promised her that I would take care of Ziyue...”

Gu Guoying started crying as she spoke. Gu Ziyue was very smart. She saw Gu Guoying and then quickly ran back to Gu Guoxiang’s side, wrapping her arms around his leg, crying out, “Daddy, Daddy, don’t let Auntie cry! Auntie treats me so well!”

Grandpa Gu told Gu Ziyue, “Ziyue, be good. Come over to Grandpa.”



He grabbed Gu Ziyue's hand. He looked at her pale and slender finger and sighed. "The children in our family. Yuan Yuan wasn't good at his studies, Mingxi doesn't have arms. What's so good about them. All our family's hopes are resting on Ziyue's shoulders. Little Ziyue, don't worry, I'll make sure to educate you. Your father said you wanted to learn piano? I'll buy it for you! I'll send you to school! Look at our Ziyue's pretty fingers. They were made to play piano."

Gu Guoxiang wasn't even a person to them. Gu Guoying didn't give up though, and she continued, "Actually, with Mingxi's condition, can't he apply for public welfare?"

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Xiao Liang worked in that area, and after Gu Guoying asked some more, Xiao Liang's face reddened. She looked at Gu Mingxi and said, "He can indeed do that."

"Can't he also apply for public housing?" Gu Guoying felt that she was so smart, helping Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian come up with such a good solution. "Mingxi, you and Pang Qian can get public housing and use that for their marriage. First register the marriage and apply for financial difficulty, and then you can get a house. Although the house will be a bit far away, but it only costs some tens of dollars each month. Aiya, you meet the criteria. Even if we wanted to apply, we can't!"

Dong Yuan said, "Actually, Mingxi can apply for affordable housing like me."

Gu Guoying shot him a death glare. "Affordable housing is more than 200 thousand dollars. Where will Mingxi find the money for that!"

Dong Yuan said, "200 thousand. Uncle can help out with that. When I bought my house, Uncle helped me with 50 thousand too."

Gu Guoying panicked to shut him up. "You fool, don't talk nonsense! Your uncle was lending that to us! We have to return it!"

Pang Qian was no longer angry at all. In fact, she felt it was kind of interesting. From the moment she spoke that lie, it was like she was watching a clown show. Originally, she wanted to let everyone know the truth, to tell them she was just kidding and she and Gu Mingxi already had a house.



But now, she suddenly didn't want to clarify things. Just let them all think that Gu Mingxi was a pauper. After all, there was nothing embarrassing about that. Just then, Gu Mingxi whispered to Pang Qian, "I'm going to head out a bit. I'll be right back."

"Where are you going?" Pang Qian asked.

"I'll tell you later." He flashed a naughty smile at her.

Gu Mingxi stood up and apologized to everyone before heading out of the room. Not long after, he returned but didn't sit down. He stood by the table and said there was a pressing matter and he and Pang Qian would leave first.

They were only halfway through dinner. Gu Guoying kept talking about public housing, and while Pang Qian didn't know what was going on, she stood up and helped Gu Mingxi put on his coat. She even helped him wipe off his mouth.

Gu Guoxiang was a bit angry. "Mingxi, what are you doing?! Your aunt didn't have any ill intentions. You don't have to be so willful!"

"No, Dad, something's really come up." Gu Mingxi smiled politely, his gaze even. "A friend of mind is visiting E City for New Year's and invited me out to talk about work."

His eyes shimmered. "I'm sorry, I didn't mention it earlier. Although I don't have a job, I do some illustration work for magazines, and the income isn't bad. As for buying a house, you don't have to worry, Auntie. I don't need my dad's help with it. Pang Qian and I have already looked at some houses and we're putting a down payment on one soon."

He was carrying on Pang Qian's fib. Gu Guoying was taken aback and then asked, "Where is the house?"

"Prosperous North."

It was Dong Ping's turn to be startled. "Downtown?"

Gu Mingxi nodded, "Yes."

Gu Guoying asked, "How big is the house? The houses there cost 20k per sqm."

"Not big, 138 sqm." Gu Mingxi smiled. "When we're better off, we can buy a



bigger one.”

Everyone else, “...”

Pang Qian had already grabbed her bag. Gu Mingxi said, “Grandpa, Grandma, Dad, Aunt, I’m heading out first. I’m sorry for being unable to stay longer. Next time, please invite me again.”

As he spoke, he and Pang Qian left the room.

A few minutes later, Gu Guoying came back to her senses. “He’s just talking big. How much money could he make from some illustrations? Does he think we’re some country bumpkins?!”

Dong Yuan said, “Mom, it’s your fault. You didn’t give Mingxi any face at all, so he could only find an excuse to leave. He probably won’t eat with us again in the future.”

Gu Guoying curled her lips. “If he doesn’t want to eat, fine. No one’s clinging to him.”

Gu Guoxiang’s expression was overcast. After dinner, he called the waiter to get the bill. The waiter walked into the room and said, “Sir, a young man already paid earlier. He wanted me to relay that since he hadn’t treated his grandparents to a meal in so many years, he would pay for this meal.”

Gu Guoying’s mouth dropped. She asked, “How much was it?”

The waiter smiled slightly. “Ah, 4380 dollars.”

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– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 106 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 106 (Part 1) Re-challenging the Entrance Exam

*I said I wasn't black bellied. Everything I said was true.*

---

As she headed down to the parking lot with Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian couldn't stop thinking about what he'd said earlier. And then she burst out laughing.

He looked at her suspiciously and asked, "What are you laughing about?"

She cleared her throat, and then mimicked him, "Not big, 138 sqm. When we're better off, we can buy a bigger one." She laughed out joyously again. "Hahaha, Gu Mingxi, you're so black bellied!"

He didn't understand. "What's black bellied mean?"

"Black bellied is, uh... On the surface, you seem really harmless, but you're actually full of tricks." Her lousy explanation left Gu Mingxi unhappy. "What do you mean I'm full of tricks?"

Pang Qian hugged him, and looked up at him cutely. "Okay, no tricks. Just a few thoughts."

He looked down at her and laughed gently. "What I said was true."

His expression was so warm, Pang Qian's heart calmed. They stood at the exit to the hotel as the cold wind blew against their face. Pang Qian held him a bit more and said, "Gu Mingxi, don't hold onto all those things that just happened."

He nodded. "I know, I don't mind about those things."

But Pang Qian still didn't quite understand. "But why do they treat you like that? Why do they go so overboard?"

"Don't you work in finance? Can't you tell?" Gu Mingxi used his nose to rub her forehead. Her skin was cold and his nose was cold too. "They think that right



now, I have nothing. I didn't come back for several years, but now that my dad's divorced, I'm suddenly back. And I'm even saying that I'm getting married. To my family, it's obvious that I'm here to get some family property."

Pang Qian thought it was unimaginable. "Even if you were back for that, it's got nothing to do with them! It's your dad's money, so what business is it of theirs?!"

"How can it be none of their business?" Gu Mingxi asked. "I've never been close to them, and they know that my dad didn't like me much. My dad's all about keeping face. Whenever my aunt goes to him with troubles, he'll always help out, whether he's got to spend money or connections. When my grandparents were sick, my dad was the one who payed for all the hospital fees, and of course, the doctors and nurses all praised him for being a dutiful son. Do you think my aunt and grandpa would be happy to see my dad giving me money?"

Living in a large and harmonious family, Pang Qian couldn't understand this situation. She asked, "Gu Mingxi, why don't they like you? You're your dad's son!"

He laughed. "You don't know, but in the past, they never liked my mom because she was an outsider (from a different city/district). My grandpa always thought that my dad married my mom because he'd been entranced by her beauty. My grandpa always said that if my dad had found a wife with a better family and better qualifications, he'd be a lot better off now."

Pang Qian was dumbstruck. "But I remember that your grandparents liked you a lot when you were little. Every time they came over to your house, they would bring toys and snacks."

"That's when I still had arms. After my amputation, how many times did you see them visit?" Gu Mingxi's tone was even, as if he were talking about something very normal. "Pang Pang, I didn't use to understand. I always wanted to do better, to be more outstanding, and then maybe my dad would like me, maybe my grandparents and aunt wouldn't dislike me. When I was in high school, I finally realized that no matter how hard you tried, there were just some people's opinions that you couldn't change. If they were certain that you were a



loser and a failure, certain that you had no prospects, certain that you were a disgrace that they couldn't show to anyone, no matter what you did, they wouldn't change their minds. They wouldn't change the way they thought about you. So then, I came to accept (the unpleasant truth)."

Pang Qian's heart ached. For all the years of torture he went through, for the fact that she never picked up on his feelings back then. And she felt guilty. She said, "When we were younger, you never told me any of this. You're always like this, always keeping everything inside and not letting anyone know. You can't keep doing that anymore."

He responded, "I won't. I'll definitely tell you everything."

Actually, Pang Qian didn't know, but there were two people who helped him through his bitter adolescence. One was Li Han, and the other was her.

Gu Mingxi had done all he could and was unable to receive any sense of belonging, closeness, or recognition from Gu Guoxiang. The things he wanted – respect, reliance, trust, encouragement, and concern – he was able to get each and every one from Pang Qian.

That boisterous little girl was the person who'd relied on him the most in this world. When he was together with her, Gu Mingxi always felt needed. Even when things were difficult, he would turn to see Pang Qian's timid expression, and then he wouldn't be scared anymore. He bravely stood up straight to stand in front of her.

A couple passed by them on the street, holding hands and slowly swinging them. Gu Mingxi's gaze landed on their hands. This was his biggest regret, that he was unable to hold her hand. He was unable to hug her. And in the future, he would be unable to hug his child.

Pang Qian seemed to sense something and she tightened her arms around his waist, resting her cheek against his warm chest. "It's cold. I want to go home."

Another gust of wind blew by. Pang Qian wasn't wearing much, so she couldn't help but shiver. Gu Mingxi pulled out of her arms and walked to the other side of her to block the wind. "Pang Pang, we can't go home yet. Come with me to meet Qi jie at the tea house."



She was doubtful. “Ah? Qi jie? She’s in E City?”

“Yeah. She’s on vacation with her husband and kid. They got into E City today and she invited me out.”

“I thought you were just making up an excuse.”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “I said I wasn’t black bellied. Everything I said was true.”

He really was a clever kid.

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Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian hurried over to the tea house. Jiang Qi was already there, and she was extremely happy to see Gu Mingxi. She hugged him and then she hugged Pang Qian. The three of them sat down.

“Xiao Gu, you seem to be doing well.” Jiang Qi lamented, looking at Gu Mingxi across the table. “You really did head back to your hometown and you found your love. Right now, you’re so handsome that you’re even captivating a married woman like me.”

“Qi jie, don’t make fun of me.” Gu Mingxi’s face reddened and he glanced at Pang Qian. She rested her head in her hands as she smiled at him.

Jiang Qi brought some good news. The new book he put out last summer was selling really well. The first printing was nearly sold out, and they’d be doing a second print after the New Year holidays.

Jiang Qi asked, “What did you decide about the film rights we spoke about last time? Four companies, four plans. Did you compare them?”

Gu Mingxi apologized, “I’m really sorry, Qi jie. Pang Qian and I were really busy with exams last month. I still haven’t looked over the papers. I’ll definitely go over it in the next few days. After I discuss it with Pang Qian, I’ll get back to you with an answer.”

Jiang Qi glared at him. “Your efficiency’s really dropped.”

“I’m really sorry. You know, I’m busy with exams this year.” Gu Mingxi felt troubled. “After the college entrance exam is over, I’ll start working on my new draft right away. I’ll give you the synopsis next month and then we can discuss it then.”



Jiang Qi laughed. "Alright, I was just kidding. Your career's on the rise, so you shouldn't put out too many works all at once." She paused a moment. "By the way, when are you and Pang Qian getting married?"

"After we get our acceptance letters." Gu Mingxi glanced at Pang Qian and then laughed. "Qi jie, you don't have to rush me. The exam is really important. Pang Qian said that I'll only have a wife if I get into a school. If I don't get in, I'll just have to live as a bachelor."

"Gu Mingxi!" Pang Qian's face burned with embarrassment and she smacked him in the side. "Don't distort my words!"

Jiang Qi laughed out loud. "I used to think that someone as introverted as Xiao Gu would surely find a gentle and tender girlfriend. Now I realize that actually he changes when he dates. It's really so unexpected."

The three of them spent two hours at the tea house chatting very happily. When they were about to part, Jiang Qi told Gu Mingxi that the movie script for My Miss Crab had already been completed and all the investments were in place as well. They were currently casting and would start filming soon.

"Wow!" Pang Qian asked excitedly, "Who's acting in it?"

"We don't know yet. The actors auditioning are mostly unknowns." Jiang Qi glanced over at Gu Mingxi and said, "Originally, the production company wanted to bring on the original writer to help with the script, but Xiao Gu declined. The two of you could have come by the set otherwise."

After saying goodbye to Jiang Qi, Pang Qian went home with Gu Mingxi. On the way, she asked, "Why didn't you agree to work together for the script?"

"I don't have any experience with it and I was busy studying. Moreover, when the adaptation rights for the movie turned into money, I told myself that this story would have nothing else to do with us," he answered very seriously. "Our story only exists in the book that I drew. The one that's going to get filmed is a different story. No matter how the adaptation turns out, I won't express any opinions on it."

Pang Qian suddenly thought up another question. "In the movie, what are our names?"



“I don’t know either.” Gu Mingxi laughed. “When it starts airing in theaters, we’ll find out.”

The car arrived at the Prosperous North and Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi took the elevator up to the 22nd floor. She pulled out the keys and opened the door. Then she turned on the living room light.

A warm yellow glow lit up the living room. Pang Qian took off her shoes and immediately went to help Gu Mingxi who was trying to take his off. She had him sit down and then she crouched down to help him take off his shoes. “One pair of these costs more than 2000 dollars. If you take them off like that, they’ll get ruined very quickly.”

He muttered, “How petty.”

She recalled that he’d told her that he footed the bill at the restaurant and then glared at him. “You’re the one who’s too generous!”

The two of them changed into slippers, a pair of fuzzy monkey couple slippers. Pang Qian turned on the heat and helped Gu Mingxi take off his coat and told him to go wash up.

After Gu Mingxi showered, he changed into a pair of velvet pajamas. When he stepped out of the bathroom, he heard the whirring of the kitchen exhaust fan. He walked over and then saw Pang Qian with an apron on, cooking noodles in the brightly lit kitchen.

A pot of noodles was bubbling on the stove, and on the counter, there were two bowls with fried eggs. One bowl had one, and the other had two.

Pang Qian cut up some vegetables and dumped them into the pot. After awhile, she turned off the stove and turned to look at Gu Mingxi who was standing at the door.

She laughed. “I didn’t really eat anything for dinner, so I’m starving. I figured it was the same for you.”

He nodded. “I am pretty hungry.”

“Taste what I made!” She waved the soup spoon in an arc through the air. “If it’s too bland, you can add salt. If it’s too salty, you can add water. In any case,



you can't say it tastes bad!"

Of course he wouldn't say it tasted bad. Not only did he finish the noodles, vegetables, and eggs, he even drank all the soup in the bowl.

Pang Qian cleaned up the kitchen and then showered before heading to the bedroom. Gu Mingxi was already lying on the bed, watching TV.

She climbed into the bed and then Gu Mingxi moved over slightly. "The bed's all warm now."

"Good boy." She hugged him and with a soft voice, she said, "Gu Mingxi, sometimes I really wonder if we've already gotten married."

"Huh?" He didn't seem to understand.

"What's the difference between us and a married couple?" Pang Qian curled her lips. "Did you hypnotize me, and we've actually already registered our marriage?"

"No." He raised his chin to look at her. "We can register our marriage anytime. You're the one who said we had to wait until after the entrance exams."

She pouted and murmured, "How insincere."

"Mm? What did you say?"

"Nothing." She suddenly straddled him and started unbuttoning his pajamas. "What I was saying is that we should get started on homework."

Startled, he gaped at her without saying a single thing. She'd already leaned in for a deep kiss.

.....

After the Spring Festival, by the suggestion of his 'manager' Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi sold the full rights to another book. He handed the 800 thousand dollar bank card over to Pang Qian and said that it was a late Valentine's Day present, and that his manager should take care of the finances.

She was unhappy. "Why did the price drop for this? Is it because they don't like you?"

Gu Mingxi smiled. "No, this just isn't as popular as My Miss Crab."



“Oh!” She held her face shyly.” I know, it’s because I’m just too cute!”

She suddenly gave him a nonsense suggestion. “Actually, you can draw the sequel to My Miss Crab, and you can call it My Crab Wife. And then you can do My Crab Son, My Crab Grandson... Then we’ll never run out of money!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

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At the start of March, Fudan released the score cutoff for the first exam. Pang Qian successfully passed and received the opportunity to take the second round exam in Shanghai at the end of March.

Zou Liwen gave Pang Qian a call and told her to arrange a weekend for him to take her to Shanghai.

“I’ll introduce you to an advisor,” he said. “The next exam also has an interview portion. Discussing things with an advisor first is really important.”

Pang Qian was so touched she nearly cried. On the day they set out, Zou Liwen drove to their building. Through his rearview mirror, he saw Pang Qian and a young man walking over.

The man was pretty tall and compared to that photo, he seemed to have matured greatly. Zou Liwen’s gaze swept over the man’s empty shirt sleeves and then he lowered the car window.

Pang Qian had already bent over and said, “Team Leader, I’m bringing a family member along today. That’s not a problem, right?”

Zou Liwen helplessly shook his head. “Would I be able to send your boyfriend back upstairs?”

“No.” Pang Qian giggled as she opened the back door and got in with Gu Mingxi. She said, “Team Leader, let me give an introduction. Gu Mingxi, my boyfriend. Zou Liwen, my team leader.”

“Former team leader,” Zou Liwen added as he started the car.

“No, no, no. You’ll still be my team leader in the future.” Pang Qian’s mouth seemed like it was covered in honey. “Team Leader, I don’t want to be jobless after graduation. Please take care of me in the future.”



Gu Mingxi couldn't help laughing. "Mr Zou, hello."

"Hello."

Zou Liwen felt that he was a professional driver. The entire drive, sitting in the backseat, Pang Qian prattled on nonstop. Gu Mingxi occasionally said a few things, but Zou Liwen concentrated on driving and didn't say a single thing. After driving for half an hour, Pang Qian suddenly said, "Aiya, I forgot to eat the breakfast I brought." She pulled out a plastic bag and asked Zou Liwen, "Team Leader, do you want some pancakes? My boyfriend made them. They're really good."

Zou Liwen, "No, thanks, I've already eaten."

Pang Qian didn't continue the courtesies and just ate the pancakes. She also fed Gu Mingxi two pieces.

The car was filled with the smell of scallion pancakes. Zou Liwen took off his sunglasses. When it came to Pang Qian, he was always at his wits' end.

When they arrived in Shanghai, Zou Liwen drove to his alma mater, Fudan University. He contacted the advisor and brought Pang Qian to his office. Gu Mingxi waited downstairs for them. After awhile, he suddenly grew curious about the campus, so he started strolling around on his own.

He walked down the street and passed by a school building. There were lush trees growing by the road, and then groups of young students passed by him. Some of them noticed his distinctness, but they didn't show surprise. Instead, they smiled slightly at him, and Gu Mingxi returned their smiles. He continued walking until he saw the Fudan landmark—the 142m tall Guanghua Building.

"As the dawn comes again, so does the sun shine and the moon glow."

—Each and every day, the light of the sun and moon shines on this place.

Gu Mingxi stood in front of the Guanghua building and looked up at it. This was a pretty new building, but standing before it, Gu Mingxi felt so very small.

He suddenly felt very jealous that Pang Qian would have the chance to study at this place of higher education, to become a part of this school's legacy. He recalled many years ago that he and Pang Qian had sat side by side on a park



bench. She told him that she wanted to go to school in Shanghai. Gu Mingxi laughed and asked if there was a school she wanted to go to.

Her eyes lit up as she said, "Yes! Fudan!"

At the time, they were so very young.

Pang Qian and Zou Liwen walked out of the advisor's office and gave Gu Mingxi a call. He said he was at the school motto wall.

The two of them headed over to find him. As they walked around the campus, Pang Qian took in the unfamiliar scenery and atmosphere of the school and she grew excited.

Meanwhile, Zou Liwen's expression was very light. His hands were hooked at his pants pockets as he pointed out the things Pang Qian had to remember for the second round exam. When they passed the basketball court, he suddenly stopped and looked that way a moment before walking on with Pang Qian.

Pang Qian turned to look at him and asked curiously, "Team Leader, did you suddenly remember your college girlfriend?"

Zou Liwen glanced at her. "You seem to be very interested in my love life."

"Of course not!" Pang Qian cried out innocently. "All the female employees at Jialai know that I'm your disciple, so they kept asking me about it."

Zou Liwen smiled.

Pang Qian asked gutsily, "Team Leader, you're already 36. Why don't you get a girlfriend?"

"None of your business." Zou Liwen asked, "You know, Yu Jialei's getting married next month."

Pang Qian's eyes widened. "Really? Tell him I said congratulations, but I won't make it to his wedding."

"I might not go to the wedding."

"Ah? Why not? Yu Jialei said that you two were best friends for many years."

"..." He paused for a moment and then said, "I just don't want to run into my ex-girlfriend."



Dark lines crossed Pang Qian's face. (Note: The expression alludes to those black lines that drop down on someone's face in cartoons and stuff)

When they were nearly at the school motto wall, Pang Qian saw that particular figure in the distance and her eyes immediately lit up. Her expression softened as well.

Zou Liwen looked at her. Quickly and quietly, he said, "Pang Qian, do you remember when you first showed me the picture of you and your boyfriend? At the time, I just felt that you'd end up with him in the end."

Pang Qian turned and looked at him with surprise. Zou Liwen had never smiled so warmly before. "My ex-girlfriend and I were childhood friends too, but we weren't as fortunate as you two."

Pang Qian walked over to Gu Mingxi who was still staring at the school motto wall.

"Rich in knowledge and tenacious of purposes, inquiring with earnestness and reflecting with self-practice."

Pang Qian hugged Gu Mingxi and asked, "What's this mean?"

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment and then said, "Probably something like people should study extensively and have a firm goal in mind. You have to be curious and ask questions. You shouldn't have unrealistic fantasies, but rather consider things from your situation."

She frowned. "Why are you being so profound?"

"It's not being profound." Gu Mingxi laughed. "Pang Pang, I wish you success in your next exam. When you become a part of this school, all of your history will embody this motto."

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Chapter 106 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 106 (Part 2) Re-challenging the Entrance Exam

*I said I wasn't black bellied. Everything I said was true.*

---

At the end of March, Pang Qian successfully completed her second round exam. The heavy stone hanging on her heart for the past year finally fell off.

She wasn't at peace while waiting for her admittance letter though. Every day, she would help Gu Mingxi with his arts and culture lessons review.

Teacher Dai helped Gu Mingxi find a prep academy, and without hesitation, Pang Qian decided to study with him all day. Under his daughter's instruction, Pang Shuisheng went to the carpenter to have a custom desk made for Gu Mingxi, which they then moved into the prep academy classroom. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi once again became glorious students studying to take the college entrance exam.

In the final months before the exam, Gu Mingxi worked on a lot of practice problems. This time, he didn't need to score more than 600 points. He only really needed to score more than 400 points to make the cutoff, but he felt since he was disabled, there would be more of a guarantee to score a bit higher. So then, he made his personal goal to get more than 500 points.

Pang Qian went with him to class, worked on practice questions, and took mock exams with him. She ate food, drank water, and went to the restroom with him. The students in the class didn't interact with each other much, so Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat together at the back of the class, not disturbing anyone else.

The weather started getting hotter, and they two of them sat in the corner where the breeze of the electric fan couldn't reach. Pang Qian brought along a



handheld fan and would fan Gu Mingxi from morning until night.

During break times in class, she would insist Gu Mingxi stop working. Then she would massage his legs or stand behind him to massage his shoulders.

She even brought along snacks and soup in a thermos. Occasionally, a fragrant smell would drift across the room from their corner, causing the students snacking on cookies to (figuratively) collapse.

At the prep school, sometimes Gu Mingxi's heart would ache to see Pang Qian spending all day in the classroom with him. When he tried to convince her to go home, she didn't agree. She said, "Here I was thinking that it's not long enough. You don't know how much I miss those days when we sat in the classroom together. There's just one more month. I'll definitely work hard together with you!"

They were the most peculiar students at the prep academy, a pair of older lovers. The male was disabled and the female came along to help him study. Every day, they walked side by side into the school. They didn't leave all day, until 9 o'clock in the evening, when they would finally head home exhausted.

In those few months, Gu Mingxi had been drowning in a sea of study questions. He was tortured by all the now-unfamiliar English, math, and science. For him, the best comfort was being able to 'do homework' together with Pang Qian at night.

But sometimes, after he washed up and happily returned to the bedroom, he'd find that Pang Qian had already fallen asleep from exhaustion.

Like a kitten, she curled up on the bed. Gu Mingxi sat down beside her and lowered his head to look at her face.

In this quiet and peaceful moment, his heart stopped beating restlessly. Instead, it became much more calm and warm. He looked around the room, at the light beige walls, the mahogany floors, the white furniture, the warm glow of the light... The TV was still on, broadcasting some predictions for the 2012 European cup. On the TV stand were a few picture frames filled with images of him and Pang Qian. Next to that, there were some potato chips and candied fruit, the things Pang Qian loved eating when she watched TV.



The dresser was covered with Pang Qian's makeup and skincare products, as if exclaiming that a woman lived in this room.

Their room had a bay window with a white wool pad and a large flower patterned pillow on top. When the sun shined in during the winter, Pang Qian would often sit there together with Gu Mingxi. They listened to music together, read books together, and drank fragrant coffee together.

Over and over again, he felt bursts of joy inside. This was his and her home.

He quietly climbed onto the bed and picked up the remote with his foot to turn off the TV. He turned off the light and kissed Pang Qian's cheek. "Pang Pang, goodnight."

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In June, Gu Mingxi's second college entrance exam came. He wasn't anxious though. When he woke up, Pang Qian helped him put on a white shirt and a pair of loose, beige pants.

She said, "Wearing beige will help stay cool a bit."

She sent him to the testing center and, as expected, he attracted many curious eyes. Sitting at the door to the exam center were also some reporters who wanted to interview him. Pang Qian declined, protecting Gu Mingxi until he walked inside. As he was about to head inside, Pang Qian suddenly called out to him.

She pulled out a red necklace from her pocket. The necklace had a small silver pendant on it. Gu Mingxi took a closer look, and it was a '100 points' image (?).

His mouth twitched as he watched Pang Qian seriously tie it around his neck and tuck it into his shirt. She pat his chest and said, "They say its a test charm, and it will lend you blessing to pass the exam."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian waved her fist enthusiastically. "Gu Mingxi, you can do it!"

Under the sun, his forehead started sweating, but there was a bright smile on his face. He couldn't help kissing her. "I promise that we'll see each other in Shanghai in September."



In the days leading up to the entrance exam, the temperatures had risen. Pang Qian felt like a parent, sweating in front of the examination center, waiting for her Gu Mingxi to come out.

Finally, the bell signaling the end of the exam rang. Pang Qian let out a deep breath. Not long after, she saw Gu Mingxi's shoulders walking towards her. He was walking pretty quickly so his shirt sleeves swayed about. As he walked, a smile came onto his face and his eyes curved up. His eyes were clear and bright and his smile was warm enough to melt her heart.

She couldn't help it and she ran towards him with her arms open, throwing herself into his warm chest.

About half a month later, the scores were announced. Gu Mingxi passed the cutoff for his exams for first tier arts and culture students by 130 points. There was no doubt that he'd done well enough.

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# Chapter 107

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 107 Heart Like the Sea

*Pang Qian, I love you. Will you marry me?*

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The first batch of notices for arts schools came out in mid July. Every day, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi waited at home, and finally, the postman came.

The day that the acceptance letter came, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi invited Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua out for a celebration dinner. Halfway through dinner, Pang Shuisheng said, “Qian Qian, Mingxi, you two have both received your admission notices and you’ll be heading to Shanghai in September. Shouldn’t you take advantage of the summer break to register your marriage? As for the wedding, we can do it on National Day or over the Spring Festival. You guys can decide that.”

Gu Mingxi glanced at Pang Qian, his lips raising up slightly. Pang Qian often joked about registering their marriage, but in the end, she would retract her words, saying to wait until the entrance exams were over. Now, both of their study plans were set, so he thought that Pang Qian would agree.

Instead, as she was gnawing on a chicken foot, Pang Qian casually said, “There’s no rush to have a kid while we’re in school, so we’ll talk about registering the marriage later.”

Gu Mingxi was startled, and Pang Shuisheng was also shocked. He originally planned to have the two kids register their marriage so he could add Gu Mingxi to their family registry. He hadn’t expected at all that Pang Qian would block his plans.

Pang Shuisheng was in a bit of an awkward situation. He was, after all, a father-in-law. He told Gu Mingxi, “Indeed, you can’t have a child while you’re in



school. There's no rush. You two discuss it yourselves. We won't push you."

Jin Aihua asked Pang Qian, "You can't have a kid while you're doing your degree? You're already 27. You'll be 30 by the time you graduate."

"Nope." Pang Qian lied, "Mom, how can I walk around school with a big belly!"

Jin Aihua figured that was true, so she didn't say anything in response.

When they returned home that night, after Pang Qian showered and got into bed, Gu Mingxi decided to have a discussion with her.

He laughed and said, "Pang Pang, let's celebrate our birthdays together next month."

"Huh?" Pang Qian pulled out her phone and opened the calendar. "There's 10 days between them. Why would we celebrate it together?"

"We can just celebrate it on your birthday." He looked over at the calendar on her phone. "The 13th is on Monday, and it's the 26th of the 6th month on the lunar calendar. Not a bad day. We should go register our marriage."

"..." Pang Qian didn't respond as she swiped through the calendar all the way through August 2013. Then she showed the screen to Gu Mingxi. "See? August 13th next year is my birthday, and it's also Qixi."

Gu Mingxi stared at her.

Pang Qian laughed and her eyes curved up. "Think about how rare it is! The last time our birthdays were on the same day was when I was 9! Gu Mingxi, we should register our marriage next August 13th!"

Gu Mingxi's mouth dropped. "You're the one who said we should register it after we got our acceptance letters."

Pang Qian's eyes rolled around. "Ah... Did I say that?"

"You did," he responded seriously.

Pang Qian's lips curled up. She knelt on the bed and suddenly reached out her hands to hold Gu Mingxi's face and pushed his cheeks together. Gu Mingxi couldn't avoid her, so he could only stare at her with wide eyes. Pang Qian pinched his cheek and said firmly, "Gu Mingxi, why are you so stupid?!"



And so, this question remained unsettled.

After the college entrance exam finished, Gu Mingxi started preparing his next book. Before he started drawing, he had a discussed with Jiang Qi about the main points of the story and he also had to research some things.

The summers in E City were blisteringly hot. Pang Qian was too lazy to go out as well. After spending half a year working so hard, she just wanted to rest at home for two more months. Pang Qian would stay at home in the air conditioning every day with Gu Mingxi. He worked and she browsed the net, watched TV dramas, and played games. In the morning, the two of them headed out together to buy groceries and then after dinner, they would go out for a walk. When he worked on his draft, Pang Qian napped comfortably through the afternoon. It was the same day after day, and yet, they didn't find it boring.

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One day at the end of July, Jiang Zhiya called Pang Qian and said that there was a concert being held by a Taiwanese singer. Because of work, she was able to get tickets and she had some extra, so she asked if Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi wanted to go.

Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, and since they didn't have anything to do, she thanked Jiang Zhiya and went to pick up the tickets.

The concert would be starting soon. That evening, the weather was still hot and stuffy. Leaving her face bare, Pang Qian pulled her hair up in a ponytail. She wore a loose t-shirt, denim shorts, and a pair of slippers, ready to head out to the gym arena for the concert.

Gu Mingxi wasn't dressed as casually though. He had on a light yellow shirt with jeans. He wasn't dressed in loose pants as usual, like when he was going to the market or for a walk on the beach. Before they left, he was even sitting in the bathroom, looking at himself in the mirror. He held a comb to his hair, seriously tidying it up.

Pang Qian looked at him oddly and asked, "We're just going to see Jiang Zhiya, aren't we? Why are you making yourself up so much?"

Gu Mingxi saw the clothes she was wearing and instead asked, "Do you want to change into a dress?"



She said, “No, too much trouble.”

The singer holding the concert wasn't very popular, but she was good at singing love songs. Pang Qian carried a cold cola and bobbed her head along with Gu Mingxi, pleased with the music. The only uncomfortable thing was that the gym was really quite hot, like being in a steamer. Pang Qian's back was covered in sweat, but she just thought of it as going to a sauna.

When the singer started singing a classic love song, Pang Qian saw a sudden commotion at the front, near the stage. She looked over curiously. It seemed that several rows from the front, a young man had proposed to his girlfriend.

The lighting was dim and light sticks waved through the air. Almost everyone was standing up, stretching their necks to catch a glimpse. The audience circled around the main pair, and the man kneeled down. He held up an open jewelry box with a shining ring inside.

Pang Qian excitedly hit Gu Mingxi's side. “Wow, it's a proposal!”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

That girl was surprised and also embarrassed. She held a hand over her mouth and looked like she was going to cry.

Someone in the crowd started cheering, “Marry him! Marry him! Marry him!”

Pang Qian chanted along with them. She even whistled passionately and applauded loudly. Gu Mingxi's mouth twitched as he looked at her, slightly uneasy.

The girl being proposed to twisted in embarrassment, and then the boy got down on one knee and started speaking. The singer was still singing, her tender voice moving the entire audience. It was noisy so Pang Qian didn't hear clearly what the boy said. She just saw the girl sniffing and nodding. Then the crowd around them started cheering loudly. Pang Qian happily raised up her light stick. Gu Mingxi was quiet the entire time, as if in shock.

The boy held the girl's hand and helped her put her ring on. Finally, he stood up and pulled the girl into his arms. A perfect marriage proposal scene came to an end, and the excited audience gradually quieted a bit and continued listening to the concert.



That pair of lovers stood close together. Seeing their backs, Pang Qian let out a sigh in their heart: I wish all the couples in the world could become family.

After the crowd settled, Pang Qian quietly told Gu Mingxi, “Actually, I think that kind of proposal is pretty silly. Like a monkey in a zoo, with everyone watching you... If the girl agrees, then it’s okay, but what if she doesn’t agree? That would really make the guy lose face.”

Gu Mingxi’s eyebrows jumped up. He asked, “Don’t you think it’s kind of romantic?”

“What’s romantic about it? You’re just trying to be the center of attention,” Pang Qian said. “Although I don’t know them, and it was pretty fun when it happened, I think the guy was a bit frivolous. If I were the girl, and I originally liked him, I might reconsider at that moment.”

A cold sweat came down from Gu Mingxi’s forehead.

He said, “Pang Pang, can you pull out the phone in my pocket?”

“What do you want to do?”

“I... I want to make a call.”

As instructed, she pulled out his phone and asked, “Who do you want to call? I’ll dial it.”

With a slight stutter, he said, “Wang... Song.”

“Wang Song? Why do you want to call Wang Song?” Pang Qian started dialing Wang Song, but then the opening of a song started playing in the arena.

Gu Mingxi’s expression immediately turned unpleasant.

It was [a song](#) that Pang Qian had never heard before. The female singer’s voice was clear and refreshing and Pang Qian was gradually drawn into it.

Oh, how I wish I was a candle  
To light up when you need me  
When you’ve lost your way  
To guide you from being lost

She forgot to dial Wang Song’s number and was focused on listening to the



song. Just then, some noise came from behind them. And then the crowd grew restless once again.

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Pang Qian casually turned to look and was stunned.

Under the not-very-bright lights, she saw a few familiar people. Wang Song, Li Xiaoyan, Jian Zhe, and Liu Hanlin were all walking down the steps toward them.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi's seats were at the side of the stairs. The four of them walked over with big smiles on their faces. Li Xiaoyan was carrying a large furry stuffed bear in her arms. Jian Zhe was carrying a bouquet of roses. Liu Hanlin was happily taking photos with his DSLR. And lastly, Wang Song came out with a velvet jewelry box in his hands.

Pang Qian was completely dumbstruck and her mouth dropped open. She even forgot to glance over at Gu Mingxi, whose face was completely red now. She heard his voice apologize, "I'm sorry, I didn't know someone else would be proposing. I know that right now, this may be a bit foolish, but... I really wasn't just trying to grab everyone's attentions."

The female singer was still singing.

My heart is like the sea  
Gentle at times, but also fierce  
In this impermanent life  
I'll stay with you and never leave

I want to sing out loudly  
And no one can stop me  
I want to share it together with you  
All the happiness and sadness in this life

When Wang Song, Li Xiaoyan, Jian Zhe, and Liu Hanlin surrounded Pang Qian, Gu Mingxi didn't give her any time to react. He was already kneeling down on one leg in front of her.

Wang Song opened the jewelry box and a diamond ring showed up in front of Pang Qian's eyes.

Gu Mingxi looked up at her. All around them, the crowd was cheering and



whistling, light sticks twinkling brightly in the background. Some people had already noticed how the man was different from most people. He had no way to hold up the ring for his beloved woman. He could only look at her with his dark eyes, his gaze piercing into her heart.

He didn't say any moving words, maybe because he'd been affected by the proposal scene they saw earlier or he originally didn't prepare anything. He just said, "Pang Qian, I love you. Will you marry me?"

Liu Hanlin snapped a photo from beside them, and Pang Qian's heart started pounding out of control. She suddenly thought that this story was just too magical. When she complained to Gu Mingxi about how foolish some guys were with their proposals, she actually felt a bit envious inside.

Maybe it was a dream that every girl hid inside her heart, for the person they loved to create such a romantic scene. When he knelt down in front of you to propose, you really felt like a princess.

Was Gu Mingxi foolish? Extremely!

Was Gu Mingxi crazy? Too crazy!

Was Gu Mingxi brave? Of course, definitely! She'd never expected him to do something like this.

Tears started streaming down Pang Qian's face. She felt so ashamed. She didn't want to cry, but her tears wouldn't stop flowing out. She cried a lot, and even at the end, she was crying. She looked at Gu Mingxi's face. He hadn't moved since the start, still down on one knee, stretched up, broad shoulders extended, gentle but firm eyes. She looked into his eyes. Trembling, she slowly stretched out her hand and cupped his cheek.

The scenes of their past started passing through in her mind. That youth with a white shirt, and that gluttonous and silly girl. They kept growing up, and finally fate brought them to marriage's door.

Our love will keep on growing  
Keep on giving and no longer hide  
All the setbacks and hopes that belong to us  
They're like the dew that lets the flowers bloom



Pang Qian bent over and held his face in her hands. She closed her eyes and kissed him gently. She didn't answer to the world, but instead, she whispered in his ear, "I love you too, Gu Mingxi. I will marry you, yes. I'll be your wife, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, for the rest of our lives."

Her hand trembled as she pulled out the ring from the box. In front of Gu Mingxi, she put the ring onto her left ring finger. Gu Mingxi suddenly stood up and leaned into her. She hugged him tightly and closed her eyes, all the sounds around them drowning out. Maybe there was applause, maybe there was cheering, maybe some congratulations... But in all the chaos, she just hugged him tightly and listened to the end of the song.

This kind of light, though it is small  
It can guide someone home  
This kind of love, though it is light  
It gives an unbounded hopes

(Note: In the author's note at the end of the chapter, she shares that the titles for each part of the story came from songs by a Taiwanese singer that she liked, one of them being the song above. I've translated them fully in the [update post](#) if you'd like to check them out.)

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# Chapter 108

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 108 On the Same Track

*Gu Mingxi, why are you looking at me like that? Are you really unhappy? Just yell at me a bit then.*

---

On August 3rd, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian registered their marriage.

It was a very ordinary Friday. E City was still in the midst of its hot summer season, and the asphalt could fry an egg. There weren't very many people lined up to get married. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi arrived to to the registrar at 3 o'clock, and they were the only new couple there.

All the staff members circled them, as if they were VIP members. Even the photographer was very patient. He said, "Take a look after we finish. If there's anything you're not satisfied with, we can retake the photos."

Gu Mingxi wore a white dress shirt and his hair was made tidy and neat. Pang Qian wore a sea blue dress, her hair flowing onto her shoulders, and her eyes shining brightly. She stood close to Gu Mingxi, and the two of them smiled at the camera. The photographer took photos as he said, "The groom's so handsome! And the bride is also very beautiful! This is the best wedding photo I've taken recently!"

Not long after, this photo was printed onto their new marriage certificate.

That evening, the newly married Mr Gu officially consummated his marriage with his Mrs Gu. The first time, it was passionate. The second time, he became gentle. She fell onto him, her body limp and weak for the rest of the night.

Panting and sweating, the two of them laid side by side on the bed, just talking and discussing the events to follow.

"I want to have the wedding reception on National Day (October 1st)," Pang



Qian said. "I don't want to push it off until next year. It's too cold to get married in the winter."

He kissed her shoulder and nodded. "Okay."

But then she hesitated again. "Then we'll have to take our wedding photos soon, but... It's too hot to take wedding photos in August."

"We can take them in September."

"It'll be too late to get them done by National Day."

"Pay more to rush it."

"I guess that's all we can do... I originally wanted to take the photos in Sanya," Pang Qian said regretfully. "Too bad it's typhoon season there now."

Gu Mingxi kept kissing her shoulder, licking, biting, and enjoying himself. He casually said, "We can go to Sanya later to take another set of photos. We can go to Sanya for vacation. Uncle's retiring at the end of the year, so we can take them along."

"What are you calling Dad?" Pang Qian laughed. Gu Mingxi raised his eyes and looked at her, his lips curving into a smile. "At the end of the year, we can take Mom and Dad to visit Sanya for some sun, okay?"

Pang Qian wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her forehead against his. "Does that count as a honeymoon?"

"If you want it to, it can be. If you don't, it won't be," he said. "Pang Pang, where do you want to go? Europe? Maldives? America? Australia? Wherever you want to go, I'll go with you."

"I'll remember that." She giggled and bit his nose. "We'll send Mom and Dad to Sanya over winter, and then we'll go on a honeymoon."

His nose hurt and he frowned. Pang Qian helped him rub his nose and then suddenly whispered into his ear, "Husband, I love you."

Gu Mingxi was startled, indeed a bit unaccustomed to this name. After he thought about it a bit though, he decided it wasn't bad.

A long time ago in Z City, before Li Han had gotten sick, she used to chat with



Gu Mingxi. One time, he and his mother had an argument. They were discussing whether someone's closest family was their parents, their brothers and sisters, or their husband or wife.

Gu Mingxi thought it was your parents, but Li Han said it was your significant other.

"Mingxi, you'll be together with your wife from the age of 20 something. If you're lucky, the two of you will stay together until you're 80 or 90 years old. Fifty years together, day and night. The relationship between parents and their children can't compare to those feelings and that intimacy. Parents will grow old, and their kids will inevitably leave them. Mingxi, while you're young, you might believe that your parents are the most important, but when you reach 40 years old, you'll have to take care of your parents and your kids. You'll realize who exactly it is who undertakes the family responsibilities and goes through thick and thin with you."

At the time, Gu Mingxi didn't think it was the case. "Mom, I don't think that Dad takes on the responsibilities with you or goes through thick and thin with you."

Li Han didn't get angry. She just smiled and said, "Your father's and my marriage has been a failure, so of course you can't use it as an example. Actually, Qian Qian's parents are a good example. I just wanted to tell you that when you get married, you have to treat your wife well. You should know that being your wife won't be an easy thing. No matter who it is, she'll have to carry a certain pressure. It will come from her family, from her friends, from all around her. If she's willing to marry you despite it all, you mustn't ever let her down."

Gu Mingxi said, "What if she fights with you? Relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters are hard to be a part of. I don't want to get sandwiched between."

"I won't live with you guys," Li Han laughed. "Your (paternal) grandparents never liked me, so I know how much it hurts. That's why I won't be critical of your wife. Moreover, I trust in your insight."

.....

Pang Qian didn't wait for Gu Mingxi to call her 'Wife.' Too tired, she just went



to sleep.

Gu Mingxi didn't feel like sleeping at all. He sat up and grabbed his marriage certificate book from the bedside table. Pang Qian had kept holding onto it earlier and laughing as she looked it over.

Under the lamp light, Gu Mingxi opened up the marriage certificate and saw his photo with Pang Qian.

The photographer had avoided photographing his crippled arms. His right shoulder was behind Pang Qian and his empty left sleeve was cut off at the edge of the photo. So from the photo, you wouldn't be able to tell that he was a person without arms.

As he looked carefully at the two smiling persons in the photo, Gu Mingxi suddenly realized that they weren't so young anymore. He suddenly felt a bout of panic and thought about the words his mother once told him. Things can change. There can be accidents, illnesses, natural disasters... There are lots of stories unfolding every day in the world. Every day, someone at the hospital is found to have a terminal illness. Having already walked back from death's door as a child, Gu Mingxi understood this more clearly than others. More than anyone else, he really had to treasure his life.

Gu Mingxi turned to look at his sleeping wife and he made a vow to himself.

For all my life, I won't leave you.

After Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi agreed about the matter of their wedding, they grew very busy. She, Gu Mingxi, and Pang Shuisheng went around to various large restaurants in E City. After they estimated how many guests there would be, they reserved the ballroom at a four star hotel.

Next, they bought their wedding suit and gown, ordered wedding sweets and presents (to give to guests), and hired a wedding company to organize. After taking care of the major wedding arrangements, they still needed to take wedding photos... Mr Gu didn't much care for this at all, so he left it to Mrs Gu to take care of. He just stayed at home drawing and saw Pang Qian rushing in and out of the house delightedly. Occasionally, she would run over to him to ask his opinion about something, like how was this or how was that.



Gu Mingxi was already starting to add color for the draft of his new book. He insisted on painting it with traditional medium. Although he could use the computer to add color, but he always thought that traditional painting moved people more. He grabbed onto a pen with his toes and added color, stroke after stroke, and he felt that the readers would be able to feel his sincerity.

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One day in the middle of August, Jiang Qi came to visit Gu Mingxi in E City with an editor for a Taiwan publishing company. They wanted to discuss the copyright for traditional (character) print publications. Coincidentally, Pang Qian was expecting several wedding gifts to arrive, so she stayed at home instead of accompanying him.

That afternoon, the doorbell rang. Pang Qian thought it was a delivery, so she opened the door to see. She stood there quiet for a moment, because standing in front of the door was actually Gu Guoxiang and Gu Ziyue.

“Uncle Gu.”

Although Pang Qian was shocked, she kept her manners. She invited the two into the house and then brought them some house slippers.

Gu Guoxiang carried in a bag of fruit and he looked around the house. He said, “The place is nicely decorated.”

“Ah, it’s nothing special.” Pang Qian pat her thighs as they were a bit cramped. Gu Ziyue looked pretty obedient as she stood still next to her father. She even greeted Pang Qian.

Pang Qian invited them into the living room and let them sit on the sofa. She brewed some tea for Gu Guoxiang and brought out a drink for Gu Ziyue. She tried to feel him out as she asked, “Uncle, are you looking for Gu Mingxi? He’s gone out.”

Gu Guoxiang said, “I know. I called him and he said you were home.”

“Ah...” Pang Qian didn’t understand his meaning. “Gu Mingxi went out for some work matters. He’ll probably have lunch before coming back.”

“He told me,” Gu Guoxiang said. “Qian Qian, I came over this time to ask you two for a favor.”



Gu Ziyue quietly drank her drink and looked around curiously. Pang Qian said, "What is it? Did you talk it over with Gu Mingxi yet?"

"No, I didn't tell him." Gu Guoxiang laughed. "He said he wasn't home, but you were, so I decided it would be best to come over to discuss with you first."

Pang Qian picked up her tea and took a sip. "Uncle, tell me. If there's something that we can help with, we will. If we can't help, well then, nothing can be done about that."

"You'll definitely be able to help." Gu Guoxiang's expression was very confident. "It's like this. You know that I'm busy with work. Right now, Ziyue's on summer vacation, so I usually have my sister help take care of her during the day. But next week, my sister and her family are going on vacation to Hong Kong. I originally wanted to ask a neighbor to help take care of Ziyue during the day, but I was just notified that I'd have to take a business trip to Taiyuan next week. So... I was thinking. You and Gu Mingxi would both be at home, and Mingxi is Ziyue's older brother. If nothing else, your mother has also retired. What I mean is that next week, for the six days that my sister will be in Hong Kong, you guys... Can you help take care of Ziyue for a bit? I'd like her to stay here, and she's very obedient. Moreover... She can get to know Mingxi more."

Pang Qian listened calmly to him. After Gu Guoxiang finished, she took another sip of tea. "What about Ziyue's mom? She's not in the city?"

Gu Guoxiang's complexion paled. "I won't let her mother take care of her."

Pang Qian blinked. "Why?"

"That person isn't fit to be a mother."

Sitting on the sofa, Gu Ziyue's face sank. Pang Qian glanced at her and then suddenly stood up. She said, "Uncle, let's talk somewhere else."

Pang Qian turned on the TV for Gu Ziyue and then she brought over some snacks and fruit, leaving Ziyue to play in the living room by herself. She and Gu Guoxiang headed out onto the terrace.

The sliding door out to the terrace was double paneled glass, so the sound insulation was very good. When Gu Guoxiang got outside, he lit a cigarette. He looked at Pang Qian and said, "Ziyue's mother currently has a boyfriend and



they're living together. It's not suitable for Ziyue to stay there."

Pang Qian had her arms crossed as she contemplated. Gu Guoxiang continued, "It's just six days. When my sister comes back, she'll take Ziyue home. Qian Qian, I know that you and Mingxi are starting school in September, so you two are resting at home now, right?"

Pang Qian finally lifted her head to look at him. Softly and clearly, she said, "Uncle, I'm sorry but we can't help you with this."

Gu Guoxiang examined her tone and expression, and he realized she was being serious. A bit angry, he responded, "Qian Qian, Ziyue is Mingxi's younger sister. I came to visit you first to give a greeting, but if I were to call Mingxi, he would definitely agree."

"Go ahead and call then." Pang Qian laughed. "This is my home, my house, and I'm the one who decides who can stay here. I won't agree to let Gu Ziyue stay here. I'm sorry."

"Your house?" Gu Guoxiang's eyes squinted behind his glasses. "This is Mingxi's house! You two haven't married yet, so you don't have the right to make any decisions for him!"

Pang Qian smiled. "The right to make decisions... Uncle, would you like me to bring out our marriage certificate for you to see?"

Gu Guoxiang had no idea that Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian had already registered their marriage. As a father, it was really disgraceful.

Now that they'd come to this point, Pang Qian no longer had any regard for older or younger generations. She looked into Gu Guoxiang's eyes and said, "Uncle, Mingxi doesn't have arms. No matter what he can do, he can't be entirely self dependent. Usually I'm the one who takes care of him. It's enough that we don't come to trouble you, so how can you ask us to take care of Gu Ziyue? Do you think that someone like him, without arms, can take care of a child? And you even wanted my mom to help? You must be joking. My mom was Auntie Ah Han's best friend!"

Gu Guoxiang's face darkened. Hearing how sharp her words were, he softened his tone. "Qian Qian, I know that all of you have some misunderstandings toward



me and Ziyue, but Ziyue is a child and she's innocent in all this. To be honest, I can hire a 24-hour nanny to take care of Ziyue, but I thought and hoped that since Mingxi and Ziyue were sister and brother, they could get to know each other better. After all, the affairs of adults... I know that I was the bad one, that I've wronged Mingxi's mother, but that's why I'd like for Mingxi and Ziyue to get along. Everyone is family, so when I get older, it will be best if the two of them can take care of each other..."

Pang Qian scoffed. "Ziyue is a child and she's innocent. But Uncle, before your affair, Gu Mingxi was also a child, a disabled child. Was he not also innocent?!"

Her finger moved to the door. "I know that you treat Ziyue like she's your treasure. She's very pretty, very smart, and most importantly, very healthy. She's your pride and your hopes, someone you can show off to others! None of us will interfere in your ability to love her! I know that in your eyes, Gu Mingxi can't compare to her. He's a disabled person. When he walks down the street, everyone turns his way. When he does things, he has to use his feet! He quit school. He doesn't have a stable job. In the end, he doesn't even have a mother! But Uncle Gu, let me tell you! In my heart, ten of your Ziyues, a hundred Ziyues, a thousand Ziyues— Still won't be able to compare to one toe of my Gu Mingxi!"

She glared angrily at Gu Guoxiang, her courage already reaching the skies. "Gu Ziyue's mother was the third party who broke up Auntie Ah Han and your marriage! And in my eyes, you are an utter hypocrite! The two of you are the culprits that caused Auntie's physical and mental exhaustion that finally led to her illness! Don't you dare deny it! If Auntie Ah Han was living happily and carefree, where would she have gotten liver disease?! It was caused by exhaustion! Because of you two! Uncle Gu, how much courage do you have to think that based on this little blood relation that Gu Mingxi would want to get along with Gu Ziyue?! How much courage do you have that you would believe that in Gu Mingxi's heart, you are all still one family?!"

"Pang Qian! Don't act so impertinently! Do you know who you're talking with right now?! Since you and Gu Mingxi have gotten married, you're speaking to your father!" Gu Guoxiang suddenly screamed out loudly. His body trembled, and it was obvious how angry he was. But Pang Qian wasn't at all scared. She sneered. "Uncle Gu, don't talk to me like you're my boss. I'm not your



subordinate, and I don't have to kiss your ass. I just want to say one thing. I don't care how Gu Mingxi treats you, but I, Pang Qian, won't call you 'Father' in this lifetime, because Auntie Ah Han is my mother and she's already divorced you!"

Gu Guoxiang's cigarette nearly burned his finger. Pang Qian added her final words, "Let me say one more thing. This is my and Gu Mingxi's home, my and Gu Mingxi's house. As long as I'm here, I will never agree for Gu Ziyue to stay here, not even for half a day! I won't agree to it now, and I won't agree to it later. If you think you can convince Gu Mingxi, go ahead and call him. Ask him if he'd rather have his father and sister or if he'd rather have his wife!"

And then, she pulled open the door and headed back into the living room.

When she got back to the living room, she was shocked. She'd just been gone for a short while and the entire room had changed.

Gu Ziyue had probably gone into Gu Mingxi's studio and found the paints on his work table. She'd dipped her hand into the paint and covered the sky blue walls in handprints.

She'd dropped paintings all over the floor, all large pieces that Gu Mingxi had been working on for his new draft.

They'd been graffitied over with paint, fingerprints, and footprints. Pang Qian looked at Gu Ziyue who was holding a crystal picture frame that used to sit on the TV stand. It was a picture of Gu Mingxi and Li Han. Gu Ziyue glanced over at Pang Qian and shot her a strange smile before smashing the frame to the floor, which shattered into little pieces.

Gu Guoxiang had just stepped into the living room and he called out, "Ziyue! What are you doing?!"

He walked over to his daughter and reached out to hit her. Surprisingly, Gu Ziyue didn't try to avoid him. Instead, she held her head firm and stared defiantly at Gu Guoxiang. Gu Guoxiang's hand hung in the air, unable to hit her.

"Apologize to your sister!" he said heavily.

Gu Ziyue clenched her teeth. "No! I don't want to live here! I want to stay with my mom!"



“Apologize!” Gu Guoxiang couldn’t hold it in any longer and raised his hand. Pa! He smacked her across the face. Gu Ziyue immediately started crying and dropped down to sit on the floor.

Gu Ziyue’s piercing cry sounded in the living room. Pang Qian was deaf to it all though, as she crouched down and picked up Gu Mingxi’s paintings. She looked at them, unable to be fixed, and merciless tears welled in her eyes. Pang Qian told herself she couldn’t cry in front of Gu Guoxiang and Gu Ziyue. She walked over to Gu Guoxiang and showed him the paintings.

“Gu Mingxi drew this with his feet. One painting takes three or four days. He’s already spent more than a month on these. When he paints, his feet often cramp. But he doesn’t rest because he’s someone who chases perfection. Whatever he does, he has to do the best he’s able to.”

Gu Ziyue was still crying and Pang Qian grew agitated.

She put down the paintings on the table and then pointed at the handprint covered wall. “The walls can be repainted.”

Then she picked up Gu Mingxi and Li Han’s photo, shaking off the crushed frame. She pointed to the frame fragments and said, “You brought this frame back from abroad. To be honest, I wanted to get rid of it a long time ago. Now that it’s broken, we can buy a new one.”

She looked firmly at Gu Guoxiang and said, “If they’re messed up, Gu Mingxi’s paintings can be repainted. All of it’s in his head anyway. No matter how many pieces get messed up, he can still repaint them. But Uncle Gu, there are some things that can’t be fixed once they’re broken. Don’t think that blood ties can accomplish everything. On this point, I trust that Gu Mingxi and I believe the same thing. In the future, when you get old, we can pay for you to see the doctor if you get sick. We can hire a nurse and pay for your expenses, but please don’t expect us to personally take care of you. We’re not scheming to get any of your assets, so please stop dreaming that we will accept Gu Ziyue.”

Gu Guoxiang’s face turned ashen.

“Finally, please take your precious daughter out of my house.” Pang Qian crossed her arms and looked at him coldly.



When Gu Mingxi returned home, Pang Qian was kneeling on the floor, taking stock of the wedding gifts they'd bought. There were several boxes of stuffed dolls, some large and some small. Gu Mingxi walked over to her and looked at the gifts curiously. He couldn't help laughing and then asked "Why does the house look like a kindergarten?"

Pang Qian kept her head lowered, and Gu Mingxi finally felt that something wasn't quite right. He knelt down onto the ground and turned to look at her face. Pang Qian turned her head away but couldn't hide her face, and Gu Mingxi saw her swollen eyes still shining with tears.

"Pang Pang! What's wrong?" Gu Mingxi suddenly felt very anxious and he leaned into her. He asked, "What happened? Why are you crying? Pang Pang, don't cry..."

Pang Qian dropped the doll in her hand and hugged him. She spoke into his chest, "Gu Mingxi, I'm sorry, I'm sorry..."

"What's wrong? What happened?" Suddenly, he seemed to recall something. "Did my dad call you?"

"No, he came over." Pang Qian wiped at her eyes and then stood up. "Let me show you something. Don't hit me."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

Pang Qian brought over the messed up paintings and sat down on the floor with Gu Mingxi. She told him what had happened that morning and then pointed at the handprints all over the wall.

"I'm sorry I wasn't able to protect your paintings." Pang Qian's mouth hung open and her eyes were red. She grabbed onto a stuffed tortoise and poked its back. "I was very absolute. I don't think your dad will ever want to see me again. But Gu Mingxi, I don't regret it at all. I don't like Gu Ziyue and I don't want her staying at our house."

Gu Mingxi didn't say anything, so Pang Qian looked up at him uneasily. "Are you angry? I know I should have discussed it with you, but there's really no room for discussion on this matter. Gu Mingxi, why are you looking at me like that? Are you really unhappy? Just yell at me a bit then."



Gu Mingxi chuckled. He stretched out his leg and nudged her leg with his right foot. “Why would I yell at you? I didn’t say you did anything wrong. But... You really should have discussed with me first and then let me reject my dad. Why are you always so impulsive? We should at least try to hold up appearances.”

Pang Qian pushed the stuffed tortoise into him and responded, “What’s the point of keeping up appearances? Then it will just happen a second time, a third time, and then will you still have an excuse later? In the future, over every summer and winter break, won’t he start looking for us? It’s better to just settle things, once and for all.”

Gu Mingxi realized that he couldn’t beat her with words.

Pang Qian lowered her head and sat still stuffily. She suddenly said, “Gu Mingxi, there’s something I think we ought to talk about. We’re married now, we’re husband and wife. You have relatives and I have relatives. What I’m trying to say is that with regards on my side of the family, no matter what they may think of you, I’ll always be on the same track as you (‘same side as you’). I definitely won’t let my family bully you or wrong you, even if it’s my parents. So I hope that when it comes to your family, you’ll also be on the same track as me. I’m saying this to you because... You’re too good and kindhearted of a person. I know that you’re softhearted, so just let me be the bad guy. If you think that I’ve gone overboard sometimes, just think of your mom.”

Gu Mingxi thought about her words. After a moment, Pang Qian cautiously asked, “Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Yeah.” He nodded solemnly. “Pang Pang, I can’t say that you were completely right in your actions today, but your intent was the same as mine. I agree with you, and I don’t want Gu Ziyue living in our house. So don’t worry, in front of my dad, I’ll definitely be on the same track as you.”

Pang Qian smiled. She didn’t expect his next words. “But, Wife, are you really against having a kid stay in our house? Even if it’s just for a week?”

Pang Qian didn’t understand, “Mm?”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “I called Dou Dou’s mom today and invited him over for a few days. I promised him last year, so I can’t go back on my word.”



Pang Qian let out a sigh. “You nearly scared me to death. I was wondering what you could be thinking! Of course I welcome Ding Jiangkang to E City! Don’t worry, you can busy yourself with your paintings. I’ll take him out to play!”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 109

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 109 Red Bomb

*Ten years ago, I fell in love with you here.*

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Pang Shuisheng found a painter to help repaint the living room walls at Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi's house. They hadn't even had their wedding yet, and the nice, new house had already been ruined. Pang Shuisheng was very angry.

"Was it really Gu Guoxiang's daughter who did this?" Pang Shuisheng couldn't believe it. "The little girl's just 9 years old. How can she be so thoughtless already?"

"Thoughtless? She did it intentionally." When Pang Qian thought back to it, she got so angry. "Messing up the walls wasn't enough, she even ruined seven or eight of Gu Mingxi's paintings. Now he has to redo them. He needs to send in the draft by December, because they'll be publishing it after the Spring Festival. Now he has to spend all day and night working on it."

"You have to let him know that his health is more important." Pang Shuisheng thought for a moment and then said, "Qian Qian, you'll be getting married to Mingxi on National Day. Don't have a standoff with Old Gu. After all, he's still Mingxi's father. He'll definitely come to the wedding. Make sure you two don't cause any unhappy feelings on that day."

"He's the one who came to provoke me, okay?!" Pang Qian felt offended. "In the past, he never treated Gu Mingxi like his son. He said he was too disgraceful! Behind Auntie Ah Han's back, he got one mistress after another. Now he's gotten his wish. He's got a daughter. So he should stop coming to provoke us! Now he's saying that everyone's one big family, that siblings should develop some relationship. Tch— What a hypocrite! Gu Mingxi can take care of himself now, but if he was poor and destitute, would his father even look at him?"



Pang Shuisheng knew what his daughter's temper was like, so he tried to appease her. "Alright, don't get angry. How about this. We have to send out invitations next month. You two will be in Shanghai, so you can have Mingxi give a call to his dad to invite him, and I'll personally deliver the invitation card to Old Gu. I'll say that you two can't make it back because of school. It'll save all the awkwardness of you two meeting face to face, okay?"

Pang Qian giggled and grabbed onto Pang Shuisheng's arm. "No one understands a daughter better than her father. Long live my dad!" (Note: Funnily, I believe the phrase is usually that no one understands a son better than his father.)

Three days later, Ding Jiankang boarded the plane by himself, with the service of 'summer trip accompaniment for kids.' He flew from Guangzhou to E City. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian went to pick him up at the airport, and quickly saw the airline staff escorting the boy out.

"Teacher Gu!" When he saw Gu Mingxi, Dou Dou basically flew at him. Gu Mingxi crouched down and hugged him, who was crying and shouting. His tears even wet Gu Mingxi's face.

Gu Mingxi smiled brightly. He looked over Dou Dou and realized that the boy had sprouted. "You've grown taller!"

Dou Dou grinned proudly as he looked at Gu Mingxi. "I'm 9 years old already! Teacher Gu, look at my teeth!" As he spoke, reached out to touch Gu Mingxi's face and said, "Teacher Gu, you look like you've gotten whiter."

Pang Qian giggled. After returning to E City for more than a year, he spent less time on outdoor activities compared to when he lived in Sanya. Naturally, his skin would lighten a bit.

Pang Qian asked, "Dou Dou, was it scary riding the plane by yourself?"

"It wasn't!" Dou Dou smiled happily. "Auntie Crab, it was my first time riding the plane. They even had chicken rice! It was really good!"

On the car ride back home, Dou Dou sat with Gu Mingxi in the backseat. He opened his backpack and couldn't wait to pull out his presents to Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian – two boxes of Guangdong-styled durian pastries and a bag of



Guangdong-styled sausages. He also pulled out three test papers to show Gu Mingxi. “Teacher Gu, look. I got more than 95 points on all of them!”

When the three of them got back home, Dou Dou looked around Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi’s house, curious and excited. Gu Mingxi brought him to the baby room. Since they didn’t know what gender their future baby would be, the room was filled with pastel green toys. Because Dou Dou was visiting, Pang Qian had laid out a new set of sheets on the bed.

“Teacher Gu, is this going to be the baby’s room in the future?” Dou Dou asked cautiously.

Gu Mingxi nodded, “Yeah.”

“Then it doesn’t seem quite right for me to sleep here.” Dou Dou grabbed at his hair. “I can sleep on the sofa.”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “It’s okay, I want you to sleep in here.”

Dou Dou and Gu Ziyue were the same age, but in Pang Qian’s eyes, the two of them couldn’t be compared.

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When they went out to buy groceries, Dou Dou offered to carry the bags. When they were shopping in the supermarket, Pang Qian told him to pick up anything he wanted to eat, but he just followed Gu Mingxi obediently and didn’t ask for anything. If Pang Qian offered to buy him something, he immediately went to check the price. Then he would say, “Auntie Crab, I don’t like eating this.”

Actually, he just didn’t want Teacher Gu to waste money.

When they got home, Dou Dou wasn’t willing to stay in the living room to watch cartoons. Instead, he would slip into the kitchen, and then Gu Mingxi would chase him out. Taking advantage of the time when Pang Qian was collecting the dried laundry, Dou Dou went to the bathroom to get a cloth and started washing the floor. Pang Qian had to kneel down and spend quite a bit of time to persuade him to go back and sit on the sofa.

She gave Dou Dou a bag of fresh lychees. Dou Dou found an empty bowl and started to peel the lychees. Pang Qian looked at him curiously and asked, “Dou



Dou, do you like to peel all of them before you start eating?”

Dou Dou shook his head. “No, I’m peeling them for Teacher Gu.”

That night, Pang Qian considerately told Gu Mingxi to sleep with Dou Dou, who was overjoyed. Gu Mingxi leaned against the headboard and talked with him.

Gu Mingxi had been very worried that Dou Dou would be bullied when he moved in with his mother, but Dou Dou said that his new dad treated him really well.

“Dad doesn’t talk a lot, he doesn’t hit anyone, and he cooks really well.” Dou Dou climbed onto the bed and laid on his belly, his feet swinging off the side. He prattled on to Gu Mingxi. “Mom likes my little brother, but Dad likes my little sister more. They said they weren’t going to have another kid. They already had three, and they had sons and a daughter, so it was perfectly good.”

Gu Mingxi smiled and asked, “Then do you like your little brother or sister more?”

Dou Dou thought about it a bit and said, “I like my little sister. She listens well, but my little brother’s a bit naughty. He’s always fighting with me.”

Gu Mingxi frowned. “You’re the older brother. If you argue with your little brother, there’s no pride in winning.”

“He ripped up my homework!” Dou Dou fumed. “But my grades are better. I’m always top three in my class, so my dad helps me scold him, haha.”

Gu Mingxi’s heart settled. Thankfully Dou Dou met a good stepfather.

Dou Dou blinked his eyes, and then he asked Gu Mingxi, “Teacher Gu, does Auntie Crab treat you well?”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “She treats me very well, don’t worry. You saw it all before. Auntie Crab and I are very happy together.”

Dou Dou nodded. Proud of all his experience, he said, “Teacher Gu, I came to visit this time to make sure you were doing well. If you weren’t doing well, we could return to Sanya and live at the school. I already learned how to wash and cut vegetables. I can help you out.”



Gu Mingxi, “...”

Dou Dou crawled over and lied next to him. He curled up and closed his eyes. “Teacher Gu, I always dream about when we lived in Sanya. Once I started crying as I dreamed, and my mom had to wake me up.”

“...”

“Teacher Gu, I really, really miss you.”

Gu Mingxi lowered his head and used his shoulder to pat the back of Dou Dou’s head. He said gently, “Sleep. Dou Dou, I’ll be here with you.”

Dou Dou stayed in E City for ten days, up until Qixi. Only after spending Gu Mingxi’s 28th birthday with him, did he get back on the plane to Guangdong.

During those ten days, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian often took him out to play. They went to the Children’s Park, the aquatic center, museums, bookstores, the aquarium... They took him out to eat and watched animated movies. Every night, they went to the supermarket to enjoy the air conditioning.

Pang Qian brought Dou Dou to her parents’ house to eat. Dou Dou was a very smart kid and his greeting of Grandpa and Grandma left them overjoyed. After they ate, he helped Jin Aihua clean up, and he was very deft at it. Seeing this made Jin Aihua’s heart ache, so she gave him a red envelope.

When he parted with Gu Mingxi at the airport, Dou Dou was firm and didn’t cry. He carried his backpack, which was filled with new clothes and toys that Gu Mingxi bought for him and his siblings. He passionately waved goodbye to Gu Mingxi.

“Teacher Gu, bye! I’ll definitely study well and come back to E City for school!”

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After Dou Dou left, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi started preparing to head to Shanghai.

They drove there a week early with their luggage, preparing to rent a place near Gu Mingxi’s school.

Although they had known previously, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were still surprised to find how far apart their schools were. Fudan was in the Yangpu



District and Gu Mingxi's school was at Songjiang University Town. Pang Qian tested it out and drove from Yangpu to Songjiang Town, and it was more than 50km away, taking more than two hours by car.

She called Wu Feiyan and asked how long it would take by the subway. She said you had to transfer from the bus to the subway to another line to another bus... And it would take about two hours.

Pang Qian was in despair.

"What do we do know." She was extremely depressed, dropping against the steering wheel out of sorts.

Gu Mingxi comforted her beside him, "It's okay, Wife. I can take care of myself. Dorm or apartment is still okay."

Pang Qian bit her lip and considered for a moment, before shaking her head. "No, I promised we'd live together. We can rent an apartment, and I'll just commute into the city."

They went around for two entire days before finding an apartment they were satisfied with. Three room and simply decorated. The landlord agreed to turn one of the rooms into a studio, so Pang Qian paid a year's rent all at once.

After one week in Shanghai, the two of them were inseparable. They went to pick up some furniture and items to fill in their house. Pang Qian invited Wu Feiyan, Xue Wenwen, and Yang Lu out to eat. This time, Yang Lu finally showed up.

Yang Lu wasn't the foolish girl that was utterly in love with Sheng Feng anymore. She'd gotten very pretty and confident. When she saw Gu Mingxi, she laughed and said, "Sorry for not making it out to the last meeting. Feiyan told me that Crab's boyfriend was extremely handsome. I didn't believe it, but seeing you here today, your reputation is well-deserved."

Pang Qian extended her hand for them to see the sparkling diamond on her finger. "Boyfriend? I'm certifiably taken now."

The three of them were startled. "Ah? Crab, you already registered it?"

Pang Qian opened her bag and whisked out three invitations. With a grin, she



said, “Red bomb! October 2nd in E City. Anyone willing to be my bridesmaid?”  
(Note: A ‘red bomb’ is a colloquial(?) phrase for a wedding invitation.)

All three girls rushed to shout, “Oh, me! Me, me!”

The last week before the start of the school semester, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi headed back to E City. They’d arranged to take wedding photos that day.

After the indoors shots, they went to a scenic area for a few more photos. And then a line of people headed to their last stop— E City’s First High.

Pang Qian had already made arrangements with the school in advance. One of the teachers on duty let them into the classroom, the one that Year 1 Class 2 used that year.

The classroom looked different from when they were students. Air conditioning had been installed in the school. There were also more water fountains and projectors. The desks and chairs had all been replaced. Since the school term had just started up, the board at the back of the classroom was filled with welcoming words to the students.

Gu Mingxi wore a white shirt, jeans, and a pair of white sneakers. Compared to when he was sporting a suit earlier, he looked much more like a student now.

He stood at the back window and looked out at the school yard. The school had put in a new running track. Red tracks around the green field, really quite eye-catching. The trees around the school yard were still there, but they’d grown a lot taller. Gu Mingxi laughed as he recalled the day he started school here. They’d sat around in a circle by those small trees to introduce themselves. Back then, Pang Qian’s speech was horrendous, but now she was easily able to hold conversations with foreigners.

A sound came from behind him. When he turned to take a look, he saw Pang Qian who’d changed clothes. She was wearing the same style of white shirt as him, with a jean skirt underneath. She was also wearing the same pair of white sneakers. She looked like a very lively student, her smile bright as a flower. Only the thin, white tulle on her head belied that she was a new bride.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood in front of the blackboard, looking and smiling at each other. There were four words written on the blackboard— It wasn’t



puppy love!

Gu Mingxi took several photos in the school yard. At the end of the summer, it was sunny, and the sky was blue with some white clouds. Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat side by side on the stands. They closed their eyes and kissed tenderly. A light breeze blew at the wedding veil on Pang Qian’s head, and it also blew at Gu Mingxi’s empty shirt sleeves. He heard her whisper into his ear, “Gu Mingxi, did you know? Ten years ago, I fell in love with you here.”

Ten years ago, on a scorching hot summer day, the sun started to set behind the school yard, and they sat there together side by side.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 110 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 110 (Part 1) Wedding Banquet

*We're finally married! It's been a 27 year long run! Has it been easy?!*

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With the start of the new semester, Shanghai's Songjiang University Town grew lively. The empty streets and desolate campus gradually filled up with people coming and going.

Pang Qian went along with Gu Mingxi to take care of school registration procedures, and then the two of them went to set up new phone numbers in Shanghai. By Xu Shuanghua's request, his teaching friend helped set Gu Mingxi up with a place to stay.

Because of Gu Mingxi's physical condition, it wasn't convenient for him to stay in a regular four person dorm room. Out of consideration for him, the school arranged a two person room at the school for him to stay in. His roommate was a 22 year old boy named Fu Qinfeng.

Fu Qinfeng was a rather introverted boy. When he first met Gu Mingxi, he didn't say much. He just helped Pang Qian to clean up a bit and helped Gu Mingxi put out new bed sheets.

Pang Qian asked him to help watch out for Gu Mingxi during the school year, especially with meals, using the restroom, carrying his art supplies and such. Fu Qinfeng nodded, "Don't worry, leave it to me."

Gu Mingxi attended the welcoming ceremony and then returned to their apartment. During dinner, he told Pang Qian about his day.

"When I walked into the classroom, those kids were all dumbstruck by the fact that I didn't have arms. Some of them thought I was the teacher or the advisor. They even called me 'Teacher.'" Gu Mingxi wanted to laugh when he recalled



that scene. “I told them that actually I was a new student, just like them.”

Pang Qian listened with interest, “And then what?”

“And then the ones who weren’t dumbstruck earlier were all shocked.” Gu Mingxi ate some rice and continued, “When the advisor came in, we introduced ourselves, and I gained a new name.”

“What name?”

“Old Gu.” He laughed.

“Puah!” Pang Qian laughed out, and the food in her mouth nearly fell out. “Why are they calling you Old Gu?!”

“They’re all 18 or 19 year old kids. If they don’t call me Old Gu, what would they call me?” Gu Mingxi laughed again. “Fu Qinfeng said he had to take the exam three times before getting in. He thought he was old and would be the oldest in the class. To be honest, he hadn’t expected there would be a 28 year old student.”

Pang Qian was extremely pleased. “28 isn’t that old. At my old school, there were graduate students that were older than 30.”

“That’s grad school though. You can’t compare the two.” Gu Mingxi frowned. “Pang Pang, actually, I didn’t use to feel that I was very old, probably because I was always in a school setting. When I was in S City, I often went to the art institute there to sit in on lectures. And then I worked at an elementary school after that. I thought I was still young. But today, when I looked at all the kids in my class, I realized that I really am a bit old. Look, there are wrinkles all around my eyes.”

He picked up his chopsticks with his foot and showed his eyes to Pang Qian.

“Please!” Pang Qian picked up a piece of luffa with her chopsticks and stuffed it into his mouth. “That’s because of all the sun in Sanya. Look at Xie Yi, he hasn’t aged at all. He could put on a school uniform and walk back into high school. Alright, I’ll go buy you some skin care products tomorrow. Who knew, Gu Mingxi, you care quite a bit about your appearance too.”

“What do you mean?” He raised his eyebrows. “But speaking of, there were a



couple girls that asked for my number today. Some of them even asked if I had a girlfriend.”

Pang Qian asked curiously, “What did you say?”

“I said that I didn’t have a girlfriend, but there was a tigress at home.”

“Gu Mingxi, you want to die?!” Pang Qian dropped her chopsticks and then smacked him. “Tell me the truth, Gu Mingxi. Now that you’re surrounded with young and pretty 18 and 19 year old girls, are you very happy?”

“Just eat your dinner!” Then he hid from her. After she was done venting, he finally laughed and looked at her. “There’s only one girl in my eyes. Forever young, who loves eating sausages, loves sleeping in, loves crying and laughing too. She’s also a bit smug and chattery.”

“Who’s smug? Who’s chattery?!” That’s what came out of Pang Qian’s mouth, but really, she felt quite pleased inside. “I can still pretend to be a girl now, but what about when I’m 30 and 40? When I’m like my mom now, you’re not going to be saying that.”

“You’ll still be a young girl.” Gu Mingxi’s smile couldn’t be hidden. “I’d still like if you gained some weight. You used to love eating a lot, and now you just eat a little and say you’re full. You’re already so thin and you say you want to lose weight. It’s not good for your health.”

Pang Qian curled her lips. “You don’t get it. This is so I’ll good in my wedding dress.”

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A few days later, Pang Qian started school. The graduate student dorms were two to a room, and her roommate was a Ms Wen. Pang Qian told her that she’d already gotten married, so she would rarely be staying in the dorm. Most of the time, she’d go home.

Xiao Wen asked, “Where do you live?”

“Over by Songjiang University Town.”

“Goodness!” Xiao Wen was taken by surprise.

Xiao Wen’s surprise wasn’t without reason, because that was quite far away



from Pang Qian's school.

After the rush and busyness of the start of school, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi slowly returned to a normal schedule. They lived near Gu Mingxi's school, and every morning, Pang Qian would wake up at 6 and leave at 6:30. Taking advantage that the morning rush hour hadn't started yet, she drove to school, and would just barely make it into her 8 o'clock class. When she returned home, the sky would almost certainly be dark.

Gu Mingxi's heart ached to see Pang Qian travel and work through the day and night, but she felt that there was nothing else to be done. For Pang Qian, driving to and school each day, eating a warm meal with Gu Mingxi, taking a walk around campus after a meal, doing her homework as he drew, chatting about their days before sleeping – even if all they talked about was what they ate that day or a joke they'd heard... These were the world's most wonderful things. Every night, cuddling with Gu Mingxi and entering their dreams together, Pang Qian felt that all her fatigue disappeared.

Sometimes, when Pang Qian didn't have class, she would tag along with Gu Mingxi to school. They would eat together or study in the library together for a bit. When Gu Mingxi had an open lecture class, Pang Qian would also sneak in and attend. The students in Gu Mingxi's class were very interesting. They really called Gu Mingxi 'Old Gu,' and when they saw Pang Qian, they affectionately called her 'Sister-in-law.'

A few of the boys were a bit naughty and clamored up about having a meal at Gu Mingxi's house. They said they wanted to taste Sis-in-law's cooking, and Pang Qian's face reddened. Gu Mingxi laughed and said, "Sure, come on over. How's hot pot sound?"

On the weekend, some ten plus students arrived at their rented apartment, like a pack of hungry wolves. Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian had prepared a lot of food for hot pot, and they all gobbled it up. In the end, it wasn't enough to eat, so Gu Mingxi personally cooked a pan of stir fried rice to fill them up.

Female student Xiao Wang said enviously, "When I get a boyfriend, I definitely have to find one like Old Gu. Tender and considerate, tall, handsome, and with good cooking skills."



Male student Xiao Liu teased, “How do you know Old Gu’s tender and considerate?”

Xiao Wang blushed. “Anyone can see that!”

Xiao Liu curled his lips. “How come I can’t see it?”

“You’re so annoying.” Xiao Wang and Xiao Liu were always bickering. Turning the attention back to Pang Qian, she asked, “Sis-in-law, how did you meet Old Gu?”

Pang Qian laughed and asked, “He never told you guys?”

“No!” Everyone cried out. Another girl said, “Sis-in-law, tell us about your relationship.”

“Ah...” Pang Qian cleared her throat and glanced over at the smiling Gu Mingxi. Earnestly, she started, “We had an arranged marriage, a betrothal in the womb.”

“No way!” the young kids called out, stunned. “What decade is this? Sis-in-law, you must be kidding!”

Pang Qian looked at them, “If I’m lying, then you’re a dog!”

.....

Gu Mingxi’s school was rather new compared to Pang Qian’s Fudan. Each building, road, and even sculptures and trees in that old campus carried a story. That place had a long history filled with human sentiment. On the other hand, Gu Mingxi’s school was new, stylish, pioneering, and full of youthful vigor.

When he walked through campus with Fu Qinfeng, he would sometimes be taken aback. The students passing by all had young and immature faces, they wore fashionable clothes. They were all 90s kids. Some skateboarded around, some carried camera tripods, some had bright golden hair like a lion’s mane. There were also some couples that stood together and kissed as if no one were around them.

Gu Mingxi thought back to his formerly brief university life. That faraway Z City, at B University, famous for its science and engineering. He’d stayed there for one year.



During that year, he was lost, confused, in the dark, lonely.

But he could hardly recall the pains from that year now. Even when he did remember some things, he felt that his past self was just ridiculously childish.

Fu Qinfeng turned back and saw him standing still. He asked, “Old Gu, what’s wrong?”

Gu Mingxi came back to his senses. “Oh, nothing.”

“Let’s go, we’re going to be late for class.”

“Okay.” He walked to the academic building with Fu Qinfeng.

After nine years, his train had finally returned onto the right path.

Thankfully, it wasn’t too late.

Thankfully, she was still waiting for him.

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October 2nd, a clear and sunny day, was the day that Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian had their wedding.

Gu Guoxiang hesitated for a long time before deciding to attend their wedding.

Grandpa Gu’s health wasn’t that good. He said he couldn’t handle all the celebration noise at a wedding, so he said he wouldn’t go. But Grandma Gu kept saying that she wanted to go to her grandson’s wedding. Gu Guoxiang decided to follow the elder’s wishes and take his mother along with him to the wedding. Dong Yuan and Xiao Liang also went.

Gu Guoxiang had remained angry after his dispute with Pang Qian over the summer. He felt that he’d been stifling his anger enough. Now that half his life was over, he kept feeling more and more guilt towards his ex-wife. And he felt more and more concerned about losing contact with Gu Mingxi.

Indeed, he hadn’t gone to B University to find out about Gu Mingxi. He hadn’t known he’d quit school. He’d always thought that Gu Mingxi’s life wouldn’t be problematic because he had his (maternal) grandparents and his aunt and uncle by his side. They would all help him. Gu Guoxiang thought that if Gu Mingxi ever ran into troubles, he would come back to find his father. No news was good



news.

When he learned that Gu Mingxi had returned to E City and was dating Pang Qian, Gu Guoxiang was surprised, but more so, he was confused. He didn't understand why Gu Mingxi had returned but hadn't contacted him. He knew that he'd wronged Li Han, but he didn't think he'd done anything to his son that he ought to feel bad about. He raised Gu Mingxi for nearly 20 years. Hadn't he fulfilled his role as a father?

Gu Guoxiang admitted that he'd been a bit demanding of Gu Mingxi in the past and they'd become a bit estranged. But he was trying to make up for it. He'd gotten divorced and had no plans to remarry currently. That meant that all his assets would be passed on to Gu Mingxi and Gu Ziyue, didn't it?

He didn't understand why Gu Mingxi looked at him like he was looking at a stranger. And Pang Qian had actually turned hostile so quickly after he asked them to take care of Gu Ziyue for six days.

It also happened that Gu Ziyue had been very stubborn and caused trouble that day, so presently Gu Guoxiang really had no face to see them. When he received the wedding invitation from Pang Shuisheng, he really didn't want to attend the wedding. Then he thought that if, as the groom's father, he wasn't present at the wedding, it would be very awkward for the newlyweds. People would speak ill of them. The Chinese held family to a high esteem, so originally, Gu Guoxiang wanted to punish Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi a bit. But in the end, he couldn't help himself. He decided to go to the wedding.

It was his son, after all. His biological son. He didn't want Gu Mingxi to be made a joke of by others.

Gu Guoxiang walked up to the banquet hall, supporting his mother on his arm. The corridor was lined with banners, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian's wedding photos. Every few meters, there was a flower wreath with a sign that said: Welcome to Mr Gu Mingxi and Ms Pang Qian's wedding banquet!

Gu Guoxiang looked at all the photos—

Pang Qian at the seafront, her veil blowing in the wind. Her long white dress spilled across the ground. Gu mingxi was wearing a white suit. He stood beside her, looking at her tenderly.



Pang Qian wearing a red dress, her arm bent in, carrying a fan. Gu Mingxi was wearing red and black evening wear. His head was tilted to the side as he sat next to her with a smile on his face.

On an athletic field, Gu Mingxi wore a shirt and jeans. He sat on the stands, his brows furrowed with a helpless expression on his face. Pang Qian was also dressed casually. She stood behind him with a big smile on her face as she pulled at his ears.

Gu Guoxiang was shocked at the sweetness and understanding that showed in Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian's photos. What surprised him even more was that their wedding photos didn't try to conceal Gu Mingxi's disability.

He thought that the photographer would help them hide it a bit, but in each and every photo, Gu Mingxi's empty sleeves hung very obviously. Whether it was a suit jacket or the cuffs of his sleeves, the nothingness there felt very unpleasant to Gu Guoxiang. The casual photos were especially so. Gu Mingxi wore a short sleeved shirt and his empty sleeves blew in the wind. Gu Guoxiang stared hard at those photos. That feeling of shame and embarrassment that he hadn't felt in a long time gradually filled his heart.

This was obviously his son, but he couldn't get over that pit in his heart.

Gu Guoxiang and Grandma Gu walked into the ballroom. The couple were at the door, greeting guests. Pang Qian was especially pretty that day. She had on delicate makeup and wore a white, floor-length wedding dress. Her hair was loosely twisted up behind her head, and her eyes were shining like stars as she greeted the guests with a big smile.

As for Gu Mingxi, Gu Guoxiang felt he barely recognized his own son. He stood straight and tall, and his hair was styled freshly and stylishly. Under his thick brows, there was a pair of shining, dark eyes.

Gentle eyes and a light smile that countered his tough facial contours and handsome features. He wore an excellent quality dark suit with a light colored shirt and a reddish brown tie. Completed with the shiny, dark shoes on his feet, he looked very handsome and extraordinary.

It's just that his suit sleeves hung so strikingly at his sides, swaying as he moved. Gu Guoxiang stood still at the side, because he'd realized that Gu Mingxi



was no longer the quiet youth with stubborn eyes that existed in his memory. He'd matured greatly, grown a lot more prudent and handsome... and also unfamiliar.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 110 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 110 (Part 2) Wedding Banquet

*We're finally married! It's been a 27 year long run! Has it been easy?!*

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When Gu Mingxi turned and saw him, he smiled. It wasn't a fake smile, but he also didn't look very happy. He said, "Dad, Grandma, you came. Let's take a photo together."

Pang Qian also turned, and when she saw Gu Guoxiang, her face went stiff. But when she noticed Grandma Gu, a smile blossomed on her face again. She said sweetly, "Grandma."

Dong Yuan and Xiao Liang gifted a red envelope and Dong Yuan said, "My parents were a bit busy today so they couldn't make it. They wanted to apologize and congratulate you on your marriage."

"Thank you." Pang Qian accepted the red envelope and then pushed Gu Mingxi off to the side slightly. She warmly greeted the others, "Grandma, Dong Yuan, let's take a photo!"

Dong Yuan and Xiao Liang stood to one side of Pang Qian, and Grandma Gu stood next to Gu Mingxi. With a long face, Gu Guoxiang stood next to his mother, and the photographer took their picture.

When they were taking photos, Gu Mingxi asked quietly, "Dad, Ziyue's not coming?"

Gu Guoxiang responded, "Oh, your aunt's taking her to her piano lesson tonight."

Gu Mingxi smiled. "Ah, it's like that."

Pang Qian brought them over to bridesmaid Zheng Qiaoqiao to take them to



their seats. Zheng Qiaoqiao held the seating chart in her hands and asked Gu Guoxiang, “Are you with the bride or the groom?”

Gu Guoxiang said, “I’m the groom’s father.”

“...” Zheng Qiaoqiao gave him a strange look and then said, “Please come with me.”

The guests quickly arrived in waves. Wang Song and Li Xiaoyan walked up, hand in hand. One of the groomsmen, Zhou Nanzhong, called out to them, “You said you were coming to help, and then you end up coming so late! You’re drinking three cups later to make up for it!”

“Fine, three cups. Who’s scared?” Wang Song smiled happily. After gifting his red envelope, he pat Gu Mingxi on the shoulder. “Bro, congrats. Class 2 ended up with two romances. That’s definitely more than usual!”

“Thanks,” Gu Mingxi said. “Thanks for your help at the concert. I still haven’t treated you to a meal.”

“Help with what?” Zhou Nanzhong asked curiously. He didn’t understand, since at the time, he hadn’t returned from abroad yet.

Pang Qian glared at him. “Migrant workers shouldn’t worry about our city folk’s affairs.”

Zhou Nanzhong cried out, “Goodness, Crab, are you so heartless?! I came all the way back to be a groomsman, and you’re still treating me like this?”

As he said that, Teacher Dai and Jiang Zhiya arrived together. Teacher Dai happily said to Gu Mingxi, “Xiao Gu, Xiao Pang, congratulations! May your relationship last long and may you bear a child early!”

Jiang Zhiya laughed. “I wonder whether Gu Mingxi or Wang Song will be a dad first.”

Zhou Nanzhong laughed along. “I bet on Gu Mingxi! They’re lovers reunited after a long separation. Ah Wang’s like an old married couple already. Hahaha! A rain coming after a drought and grinding a metal rod into a needle are two totally different things!” (Note: Rain after a drought is kind of obvious, but the metal rod into a needle is a saying that means you can do anything with enough



patience.)

Gu Mingxi and Wang Song, “...”

Jiang Zhiya looked at Zhou Nanzhong with disgust. “Gosh! Zhou Nanzhong, could you be any more obscene?!”

Wang Song said steadily, “Migrant worker, you bet on Gu Mingxi? What are you betting? What if you lose?”

“I’ll met a meal. A buffet meal at a revolving restaurant.”

Wang Song laughed. “Teacher Dai can testify. Migrant worker, you can go and make a reservation at the restaurant.”

Zhou Nanzhong, “...”

Pang Qian tugged Li Xiaoyan and asked, “You’re pregnant?!”

“Mm, two months.” Li Xiaoyan blushed and nodded her head.

The group started cheering. “Wow! Congrats!”

When Xie Yi arrived, his shining aura was like a star’s. All the bridesmaids eyes sparkled and the groomsmen clenched their teeth.

Xie Yi gifted Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi three red envelopes. Pang Qian was startled, “You really are tall, rich, and handsome. Gifting three red envelopes defies the order of things!”

Xie Yi was speechless for a moment. “One is from me, one is from Wu Min, and one is from Xiao Yujing. They’re both in America and can’t make it back. They should have told you guys already. I’m just a messenger.”

Pang Qian laughed. “I’m just kidding. Thanks for making it back from Beijing.”

Xie Yi raised his eyes. “If it were any other couple, I wouldn’t have anything to say. But Crab, it’s your and Gu Mingxi’s wedding. Of course I have to come. I was your matchmaker after all.”

Match...maker?

Gu Mingxi looked at him with a hint of bitterness, but Xie Yi seemed not to notice as he said, “Gu Mingxi, speaking of, you really didn’t give me any face. Think of our relationship. You couldn’t even give our company the rights to one



of your books? Tell me, why?”

Gu Mingxi said evenly, “Your bidding price was too low.”

With grief and indignation, Xie Yi walked into the banquet hall.

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Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua were inside, their faces aglow, as they greeted the guests. They both wore new clothes, with a flower pinned on their chest, laughing along with everyone. A lot of guests were old employees from the metals company. They were Pang Shuisheng, Jin Aihua, and Li Han’s longtime friends, and they basically watched Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi grow up together. They were especially happy to come to this wedding banquet.

A few guests who still worked at the company went to greet and chat with Gu Guoxiang a bit. But for the rest who had already retired, they would, at most, greet him, “Chief Gu,” and many pretended they hadn’t even seen him. There were even a few particular people who asked him, “Chief Gu, the princess isn’t coming today?”

How could Gu Guoxiang not hear the mocking tone in their voices?

His face was gloomy. When he saw Li Chun’s family at a distance, Li Chun didn’t even glance at him. She just chat with Jin Aihua as Gu Mingxi’s relatives.

Gu Guoxiang looked at the joyous atmosphere and realized that it wasn’t at all how he’d imagined it to be.

A long time ago, Gu Guoxiang had once imagined going to Gu Mingxi’s wedding. Back then, he’d already had a stable and powerful position at work, with friends and clients all across the country. Even in E City, he knew many businessmen and people in the political circle. In front of others, Gu Guoxiang was refined, with great expertise and professionalism. He was smooth and slick, and everyone said his future had great prospects. But all those people didn’t know that behind his bright future, he had a heavily disabled son.

Gu Mingxi was a thorn in Gu Guoxiang’s heart. A tumor, a scar. He didn’t want to bring it up, but neither could he give it up.

Gu Guoxiang often had a headache when he thought about Gu Mingxi’s wedding. He’d attended many weddings of the children of high ranking officials.



He'd gifted many red envelopes and it had been a major question about how to receive that money back, because he didn't want to let his friends know that he had such a special son.

When Pang Shuisheng had come to deliver his invitation, Gu Guoxiang asked how many tables there would be at the wedding. Pang Shuisheng said there wouldn't be too many, about twenty. Gu Guoxiang had hesitatingly said, "Actually, my friends would probably need another ten tables."

After Pang Shuisheng heard this, he laughed. "The banquet hall can hold at most 24 tables. Just wait for Ziyue's wedding to invite those friends."

He'd given a sincere suggestion, and for some reason, it made Gu Guoxiang's chest hurt.

Gu Guoxiang had always thought that Gu Mingxi's wedding would be a bit oppressive, simple, or even something others would laugh about. Other than the workers from the metals company, he actually didn't recognize any of the other guests. Unconsciously, he could see from their eyes that those people weren't making fun of Gu Mingxi.

He'd assumed that most of the guests would be from Pang Qian's side and Gu Mingxi would have very few guests. But in the end, he found that he was wrong.

Pang Shuisheng came over to give Gu Guoxiang a smoke. He told him that the honest guy who's helped with the preparations all day was called Shark, and he was a good friend of Gu Mingxi's. And the two young guys who were busy helping out were both his good friends. That ordinary but indifferent looking man was a famous painting master, and he and his group were all Gu Mingxi's teachers. That graceful woman in her 30s was Gu Mingxi's agent, and they worked together. That table of young people and the kid were Gu Mingxi's colleagues in Sanya. And those two tables of kids were all Gu Mingxi's students. When they heard that he was getting married, they insisted on coming to the wedding and filled up two tables...

Other than Jian Zhe and Liu Hanlin, Gu Guoxiang didn't recognize a single one of Gu Mingxi's friends.

Outside the banquet hall, the makeup artist fixed up Pang Qian's makeup once more and said, "The auspicious time is here. Time to head inside."



Pang Qian turned to look at Gu Mingxi and smiled brightly. She said, “Mr Gu, are you ready?”

Gu Mingxi smiled and nodded. “I’m ready. Mrs Gu, are you ready?”

Pang Qian took the bouquet that Wu Feiyan handed her and stood next to Gu Mingxi. She said, “You know, we’re not walking down this red carpet, we’re walking down a lifetime.”

He nodded. “If this lifetime isn’t enough, we can add another and another after that.”

“We’ll never part.”

“Mm, we’ll never part.”

The door in front of them gradually opened up and all eyes from the banquet hall turned to them. All Pang Qian could see was the shining spotlight and the red carpet leading to the bright stage.

The Wedding March sounded in their ears, and Pang Qian turned to check Gu Mingxi once more. He also turned to look at her. Neither of them was nervous as they looked at each other.

This wasn’t a show, this was their wedding. It didn’t need to be extravagant. It didn’t need to be expensive. It didn’t need to be perfect. And they didn’t even have to walk down hand in hand.

As long as they were sincere, a disability was no longer a disability and regrets were no longer regrets.

Their wedding was simple, happy, and festive. According to their wishes, the host didn’t try to stir up any emotions, but instead went for a very casual and entertaining mood.

Pang Qian had said, “Today’s a good day. I don’t want anyone shedding tears.”

Xu Shuanghua acted as their marriage witness and after his statement, he hugged Gu Mingxi. He said simply, “Mingxi, I have a few words for you as your teacher. Fire is the test of gold; adversity, of strong men. I know that you won’t undervalue yourself, but I still want to give you a word of encouragement. You, are definitely an extraordinary person. I wish you and Pang Qian a marriage of



happiness. When you're free, bring her to S City for a visit. We can have a drink and talk as well."

Gu Mingxi smiled and nodded. "Definitely! Thank you, Teacher."

Their tender words made several people turn to Gu Guoxiang, who felt like a thorn had stabbed into his back as he sit up straight.

When it was time to exchange rings, Pang Qian confidently put her own ring on, and then she pulled out a necklace and put it around Gu Mingxi's neck. Before the master of ceremonies said that the groom may now kiss the bride, Pang Qian had already gone onto her tiptoes and wrapped her arms around Gu Mingxi's neck. Then she kissed him on the lips. The force even made Gu Mingxi stumble back slightly.

The host had been startled. "Aiyo, it's the first time I've seen a bride in such a rush!"

The audience roared with laughter and Gu Mingxi's face reddened. Like a crazy person, Pang Qian grabbed the microphone from the host and shouted out, "We're finally married! It's been a 27 year long run! Has it been easy?!"

"Not! Easy!" It was their old friends from elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and even Gu Mingxi's students born in the 90s. They were like a group of rogues, causing the older guests to become dumbfounded.

Zhong Xiaolian cried out, "When you were kids, you always argued with us! I said that Qian Qian and Mingxi would get married when they were still drinking milk!"

The table laughed as they started reminiscing about their factory days. Sitting at the table beside them, Gu Guoxiang's complexion darkened. Their big voices drifted over, letting him hear about all the things of their past. He pulled out a cigarette, his appetite long gone.

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When they went around for toasts, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were caught by Gu Mingxi's teacher friends from Sanya. They'd thought up lots of tricks to mess with the new couple. If they were unsuccessful, their bridesmaids and groomsmen would have to drink (?). Dou Dou jumped and cheered for Teacher



Gu on the side. Groomsmen Clam and Fu Qinfeng were nearly passed out from drinking, so only Zhou Nanzhong was left. The bridesmaids, Yang Lu, Wu Feiyan, and Zheng Qiaoqiao, were all scared off.

While Gu Guoxiang was waiting for the couple to come around for a toast, he received Gu Guoying's call. She said that Gu Ziyue was throwing a tantrum and breaking all sorts of things. She was crying that she wanted to find her mom. Upset, Gu Guoxiang shouted back, "Let her call her mother by herself! If her mother wants to take her, I'll send her there tomorrow!"

After he hung up the phone, he tried to calm down. But in the end, he felt uneasy, so he stood up and picked up his car keys. He told Dong Yuan, "I've got to head home to take care of things. Send your grandmother home later."

Dong Yuan said okay and then added, "But Uncle, they haven't come to our table yet."

"It's okay, I'll let them know."

Gu Guoxiang went over to a clamoring table. Even Xie Yi and Jiang Zhiya had gone over to help out. The young people were playing very joyously, and Gu Mingxi had been fed a lot of alcohol. His face was all red. He was bargaining with Teacher Chen to drink a few cups less.

Gu Guoxiang walked up to him and pat his shoulder. Gu Mingxi turned back, slightly drunk with slurred speech. Suddenly, he went silent. Gu Guoxiang said, "Mingxi, something came up, so I have to leave first."

"Oh, okay." Gu Mingxi said he would send him off, but Ji Xiu'er wouldn't let him off, "Don't run away!"

Gu Mingxi looked back at Gu Guoxiang and said, "Dad, then I won't send you off. Be careful on your way."

Gu Guoxiang nodded. Before he left, he stuffed a bank card into Gu Mingxi's pocket and whispered to him, "The pass code is your birthday. It's a gift from me. Keep it."

Then he walked away from the crowd and lit a cigarette, heading out on the side of the banquet hall.



He heard a few voices from behind him. "Teacher Gu, that was your father?"

"Your biological father?"

"Eh? Teacher Gu had a father?"

"How come I've never heard you mention him?!"

.....

As Gu Guoxiang walked out of the hall, he saw a few colleagues. They smiled courteously at him and then went back to their chatting.

He left the joyous festivities behind, about to head out to the parking lot. Then Pang Qian's voice came from behind him.

"Uncle Gu!"

Gu Guoxiang turned around and saw Pang Qian, in a red dress, running over to him. She handed the bank card back to him and said, "Uncle Gu, take this back. We're not short on money."

Gu Guoxiang thought he would be angry, but he wasn't. He just said quietly, "I didn't even help with your newlywed house. There isn't much money, just a hundred thousand or so. Take it. It can help pay off the mortgage."

"Thank you, but we really don't need it." Pang Qian's voice was calm. "If you don't take it back, I'll just mail it back later."

Gu Guoxiang glared at her. "Pang Qian, don't casually make decisions for Mingxi."

"I'm not making a decision for him. He's the one who told me to chase after you. He has no hands, so he can't return it himself." Pang Qian didn't care and just stepped forward to stuff the bank card back into his suit pocket. She held up a cigarette and a lighter in her other hand. After giving him the cigarette, she motioned for him to put it in his mouth and then helped him light it. She said, "Gu Mingxi said that he was sorry for being unable to give you a toast, but you had to at least accept a smoke from the bride."

Gu Guoxiang, "..."

Pang Qian looked at him, "Uncle, I have to hurry back. Goodbye."



She turned and ran back, in a red dress that was as enchanting as fire, leaving Gu Guoxiang standing at the door. He pulled out the bank card from his pocket, but still didn't come back to his senses for a long time.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 111

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea

### 111 I'm You

*Really, I don't need you anymore.*

---

Gu Mingxi returned to Sanya.

Just for one night.

The moon hung above the sea, the twinkling stars lighting up the sky. The coast was filled with tropical plants, and the breeze carried the scent of the sea. Gu Mingxi walked barefoot along the beach. In the daytime, the sand would be scorching hot from the sun and it would hurt to walk barefoot. But in the nighttime, the sand under his feet felt very pleasant.

There was no one by the sea side, but he didn't find it strange. His upper body was bare and he only wore a pair of swimming trunks. When the sea water slowly washed over the backs of his feet, Gu Mingxi seemed to feel his mind get refreshed. He was a bit hot, so he needed the seawater to cool him off.

Just as he was about to walk into the water, a man's voice sounded behind him. It was very clear, a bit low, and very familiar.

"Gu Mingxi."

Gu Mingxi turned back and saw a young man slowly walking toward him.

He was tall, and the wind blew at his hair. His features were very clean cut, and his eyes were deep as the night. When he smiled, two canine teeth popped out.

His upper body was also bare, but he had a pair of strong and fit arms. As he walked over to Gu Mingxi, he pulled out a cigarette and a lighter from his pants pocket. He expertly lit the cigarette, closed his eyes, and took a breath.

Gu Mingxi looked at his elegant and pretty fingers, a burning cigarette



between them. They both remained silent.

The two men, who looked identical, stood side by side at the sea, with the breeze blowing past them. After a long while, the man asked, “Don’t you want to know who I am?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head.”

The man lifted his right hand and poked at his chest, where his heart was. “I’m you.”

“I know,” Gu Mingxi said.

“Have you seen me before?”

“Perhaps.” Gu Mingxi smiled. “When I was younger, when I couldn’t write with my feet or eat my food, I would see you at night. When the kids bullied me and when I fell on the ground as I walked, I saw you. After I was rejected by many schools or ridiculed by others, I would also see you.”

“Right. I’ve always been with you, growing up with you.” The man smiled slightly. He played with the lighter in his right hand, looking very cool. “I kept telling you that you didn’t need to work so hard, that you were different from others, that you didn’t need to give yourself such strict demands.”

Gu Mingxi said, “Although that’s true, I don’t want to see you. It’s been a long time, and I rarely think of you anymore.”

The man laughed. “But when you graduated high school, I saw you then. Did you forget? In that park, under the parasol tree. It was raining heavily and you were crying. I know that you thought of me again then.”

That was true. Gu Mingxi’s eyes darkened.

The man continued, “And after that, we met often, didn’t we? In Z City, in S City, in Sanya... Even that year in Shanghai.”

“That’s right.” Gu Mingxi’s voice lowered, but just for a bit. Then he said firmly, “But all of that’s in the past. It’s all done with and I’m doing well now.”

“What you’re saying is that in the future, we won’t need to meet again. Is that right?” The man’s eyes carried a smile. “Gu Mingxi, no need force yourself to be brave. Everyone has times when they feel weak. Everyone desires the things



they'll never be able to attain. In your heart, I'm the most perfect version of yourself, your ultimate ideal. Although you've never told anyone else, I know. You can't hide anything from me. I know that you often think, if only you were like me, things would be so great."

The man was very handsome. He had wide shoulders and a well-developed chest. The muscles on his stomach were clearly divided. When he spoke, his hands would casually gesture. He appeared very composed and leisurely, and his eyes lit up.

Gu Mingxi smiled and said, "I don't deny I've had those thoughts before, but I also can't deny that in the past few years, I haven't thought about it as much."

The man thought for a moment. "That's true. But... Gu Mingxi, you really don't want to see me again?"

"There's something you're mistaken about. You've never been my ultimate ideal." Gu Mingxi said calmly, "You're just one of the thoughts I've had, an idea of perfection that I imagined in my head during my most helpless times. I understand what my ideal is now, so, that's right, I don't want to see you again."

"You called me out to say goodbye, didn't you?" The man asked.

Gu Mingxi's deep eyes were like the sea beneath his feet. "Right, I wanted to say goodbye. Thank you for 22 years of accompaniment, but from now on, I don't need you anymore."

He took a deep breath and repeated, "Really, I don't need you anymore."

Just as he spoke the words, the man's smoke finished. As the light extinguished between his fingers, his entire person gradually turned transparent, a look of relief on his face. The tide flowed across the sand again. When the water touched his feet, he disappeared in an instant just like bubbles bursting.

There was only one Gu Mingxi left at the sea side. He lowered his head and looked at his shoulders. Aside from the scars at his underarm area, there was nothing there.

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He stood there along for a long time, and then he walked into the sea. When he was waist-deep in the water, he took a step and then his entire person fell



into the water. Gu Mingxi took a breath and rolled over before swimming leisurely in the backstroke position.

The tide pushed his body along, wave after wave. He kicked his legs and floated on the water, slowly opening his eyes to look at the expanse of sky above him. In the vast universe, the human species looks particularly small. Gu Mingxi looked at the clear image of the Milky Way, just like a misty ribbon floating through the night sky. From his memories, he recognized several stars.

He was born on Qixi, so ever since he was young, he had a special feeling for the Milky Way.

When he was younger, Li Han taught Gu Mingxi how to recognize the stars. On either side of the Milky Way, there was the weaving girl star and the cowherd star. There were two stars by the cowherd star, the cowherd and the weaving girl's children. The cowherd carried the two children with a shoulder pole. Every year, the cowherd would walk onto the magpie bridge to meet the weaving girl, and so the little stars were called pole stars.

After he learned about it, he went to tell his father. After listening to his narrative, his father said that the proper name that scientists used for the cowherd star was Altair. And the two pole stars next to it were Beta Aquilae and Gamma Aquilae.

"The story of the cowherd and the weaving girl is just a legend." Gu Guoxiang pat Gu Mingxi's head and said, "Mingxi, you're a boy. You have to understand how to separate fantasy from reality."

How could the 5 year old Gu Mingxi separate fantasy from reality? Later on, after he lost his arms, he finally understood how cruel reality could be.

The warm sea water enveloping his body reminded him of being in his mother's arms.

As he thought of his mother, he heard her voice sound in his ears.

She called him, "Mingxi, Mingxi..."

Gu Mingxi closed his eyes and smiled as he responded, "Mom."

"Mingxi, how are you now?" Li Han asked. "I miss and worry about you a lot."



“I’m doing well, Mom. Don’t worry,” he said. “Pang Qian and I ended up together. We got married. Did you see?”

“I saw it all.” Li Han smiled. “My son was really handsome, and Qian Qian was extremely beautiful.”

She paused for a moment, and then in a particularly gentle voice, she said, “Mingxi, you’ve married now. You’ll be family with Qian Qian from now on. You have to remember what I told you. Take care of her. Qian Qian’s a very good girl. I trust that together, you two will be very happy.”

Gu Mingxi wanted to open his eyes and see her, but he was afraid that after he opened his eyes, there would be nothing there. He just nodded firmly, eyes still closed. “Mom, I won’t let her down.”

“My son’s all grown up.” Li Han laughed gently. “Mingxi, I have to go.”

He couldn’t bear to part with her. “Mom, stay with me a little longer, won’t you?”

Li Han sighed. “Silly kid.”

The next second, Gu Mingxi felt that he’d been pulled into a warm embrace. Two arms were wrapped around his body, gently patting his back. He did all he could to move into her, like a drowning person, trying to absorb all the warmth of her body.

“Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi.”

He heard a familiar female voice in his ear.

At first, it sounded like a little girl’s voice, and then it became a young and tender voice. Gradually, it turned into a crisp sounding young woman. And finally, it sounded soft and smooth, like honey.

“Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi, Gu Mingxi...”

He seemed distracted for a moment, and then he felt an incomparable peace of mind. In her arms, he muttered, “They’ve all gone.”

“Who’s gone?”

“My mom, my other self...”



“Mm, they’ve all gone,” Pang Qian responded. She kissed his forehead and said, “You’ve drunk too much. Go to sleep early.”

Gu Mingxi felt like he was sleeping on the grass. On a summer evening, with empty space all around him, the breeze blew gently against the grass, and all sorts of insects sang. He smelled a lingering and familiar scent. As if calming his mind, he contentedly closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

When Gu Mingxi woke up, the sky was already bright. The sunlight streamed into the room through the curtains. He drowsily opened his eyes and turned over, pushing himself up slowly.

Pang Qian was still lying beside him, sound asleep. Gu Mingxi got out of bed and realized that he was missing a chunk of his memory. He’d drunk a lot at the wedding last night and the last thing he remembered was those bastards insisting on coming over to his house. And then they all drank crazily again. The last he remembered, he was still wearing a formal shirt and suit pants, with a tie around his neck. But now, he was wearing comfortable pajamas, and it seemed like he’d already washed up.

Gu Mingxi walked over to the window and pushed open the curtain with his shoulder and cheek. The bright sunlight immediately lit up the room, the warmth enveloping the bed. Pang Qian turned over and woke up. She saw Gu Mingxi standing by the window and then got out of bed as well. She walked over barefoot and hugged him from behind.

“Husband, good morning.” She whispered as she rested her cheek against his back.

“Good morning.” Gu Mingxi was still looking out the window. “Wife, the weather’s really nice today.”

After he stood in her embrace for awhile, he suddenly felt the back of his neck start to itch. Gu Mingxi turned around and saw Pang Qian holding a white feather.

The feather wasn’t exactly small, and in the middle, there was a thick rachis. Pang Qian giggled as she waved the soft and gentle feather around, amused.

Gu Mingxi asked, “What’s that?”



Pang Qian swept the feather along his cheek and said, “I don’t know either. Xiao Yujing stuffed it inside her red envelope.”

Gu Mingxi looked it over carefully and then suddenly realized.

He recalled an email Xiao Yujing had sent him before the wedding. In the email, she shared a story of when she was younger. After the story, Xiao Yujing said: Mr Ostrich, Happy Marriage.

He suddenly gave a light laugh. Pang Qian asked, “What are you laughing about?”

“Nothing.” He shook his head. Then he lowered his head and sucked on her lip. Pang Qian pushed him away, “You haven’t brushed your teeth yet!”

“I want to make up for the homework we didn’t get to do last night.” He bit her ear. In a hoarse voice, he said, “You only get a wedding night once in a lifetime. I drank too much. I’m really sorry.”

“...” Pang Qian looked at him oddly. “You really don’t remember anything?”

Gu Mingxi asked innocently, “What should I remember?”

Pang Qian silently pulled at her shirt collar, revealing a red hickey on her shoulder. She shyly said, “Actually... We already finished the homework last night.”

Gu Mingxi stared dumbfounded for a moment before his eyes lit up and turned. He kissed her shoulder again, his tongue gliding over the hickey. In a quiet voice, he said, “The teacher said we have to re-do the homework.”

“...”

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After the end of the National Day holiday, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi returned to Shanghai. Pang Qian’s course load was very heavy, so her schedule was packed. Thankfully, Zou Liwen had previously reminded her about getting an immunization shot, and so Pang Qian was able to push through her busy school life.

Gu Mingxi wasn’t at all relaxed either. Aside from schoolwork, he also had to work on his illustrated book. That was Pang Qian’s and his source of money for



the next few years. He was very detailed with his drawings and constantly consulted with Jiang Qi. He rarely even went out on the weekends.

Pang Qian knew about his deadlines, so she didn't complain about anything. On a weekend afternoon, Gu Mingxi was still sitting in his studio drawing. Pang Qian was a bit bored, so she and Wu Feiyan and Yang Lu went out to shop.

The girls conversation topics were a bit limited. When the three girls were drinking coffee at the coffee shop, Wu Feiyan asked Pang Qian when she planned to have a child.

Pang Qian replied depressed, "My team leader told me to have a kid while I was working on my degree. Is that really normal?"

"It is!" Yang Lu said. "Do you remember when we were in our third year, we had a senior who was pregnant while she was doing her graduate studies. She kept studying, and after nine months of being pregnant, she took some time off to take care of her kid. After another half a year, I heard that she applied for a year's deferment on her graduation. When she graduated, her kid could already walk and talk, and then she just started working right away."

"I seem to recall that, but I want to experience a world with just the two of us for awhile." Pang Qian curled her lips. "We just got married."

Yang Lu laughed. "Haven't you already lived with your husband for a year? You haven't had enough time?"

"Please. What do you mean a year? Before June, we were both busy studying for the entrance exams. After June, we were busy with marriage preparations. We haven't even gone on a honeymoon yet!"

Speaking of honeymoons, the topic suddenly changed. Wu Feiyan asked, "Where do you plan to go for your honeymoon?"

Pang Qian's face lit up and she raised up a finger. "Oh! Greece, Maldives, Fiji, Australia. Which one do you guys think is better?"

"I liked Maldives!" Yang Lu said. "I'm definitely going there for my honeymoon."

"I've been before, to the Island Hideaway. It was pretty nice, but I heard that



Fiji is really pretty too. You can go scuba diving.” Wu Feiyan asked Pang Qian, “You want to go to Greece?”

“Mm, I want to go to Greece the most. When our company organized a European tour, we only went to England, Italy, and France before heading home. We didn’t get to go to Greece.” Pang Qian found it regretful. “Gu Mingxi said that we’ll take our honeymoon over the Spring Festival, so I have to pick a place in the next few months. Aiya, just thinking about it makes me excited.”

Yang Lu curled her lips. “You’re terrible. Now, I want to get married too.”

Wu Feiyan asked, “Oh yeah, how are you and your boyfriend doing?”

Their conversation finally turned to a man.

.....

Gu Mingxi submitted the final draft for his newest book in mid January. After completing the major project, he slept at home for two days to recuperate. And then, before the end of the school term, he and Pang Qian set their honeymoon destination— Fiji.

Pang Qian was a very active kind of person. She speedily bought plane tickets and a hotel. Then she bought a bunch of new clothes for herself and Gu Mingxi, including a cute couple outfit and a pretty straw hat. She bought an underwater camera case and snorkeling gear, and then she bought plane tickets to Sanya for her parents so that they could spend some time in warm Sanya over the winter.

Pang Qian spent her time on a traveler’s forum, looking over others’ travel guides. Then she would discuss with Gu Mingxi about how they ought to spend their time in Fiji and what they would eat.

Gu Mingxi listened to her call her best friends. She happily said, “Yeah, we’re having our honeymoon over the Spring Festival. We’re going to Fiji. I’ll bring back presents for you!”

Everything was ready, and all they had to do was board the plane now.

The Spring Festival of 2013 was Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi’s first one after their marriage. Their family went back and forth between houses for New Year’s dinners. On the fourth of the new year, Pang Qian saw her parents off at the



airport.

She and Gu Mingxi would be heading out on the sixth (of the new lunar year). On the morning of the fifth, Pang Qian was packing up their things, when she suddenly felt a bit uncomfortable. She went to the bathroom and returned with a doubtful expression.

“What’s wrong?” Gu Mingxi saw that her complexion didn’t seem to be very good. He hurried over and asked, “Where is it uncomfortable?”

“It can’t be...” Pang Qian’s mouth dropped. She said, “Do you remember when my last period came?”

Gu Mingxi thought for a moment and then said, “January 7th.”

Pang Qian’s eyes widened. “How do you remember so clearly?”

“The day I had to submit my final draft was the last day of your period, so...” He laughed gently. “What’s wrong? Did your period come? Does that mean you can’t go swimming while we’re in Fiji for a few days? You should probably be able to go in for the last few days.”

Pang Qian blinked her eyes. “Gu Mingxi, what’s today’s date?”

He answered, “It’s Valentine’s Day, February 14th. Didn’t you say last night that I should make you a big meal tonight?”

“The 14th?” Pang Qian screamed out as she held her cheek. “Today’s not the 5th?! How can it be the 14th?!”

“It’s the 5th of the new (lunar) year, so it’s the 14th (of February).” Gu Mingxi knew that she was exhausted from the New Year’s activities. “Pang Pang, what’s wrong?”

“I-I-I...” Her face paled as she stuttered. “Gu Mingxi, I might be... It’s just a possibility. I’m not sure. I-I’m just guessing. I might be pregnant.”

Gu Mingxi: ☺ o ☺

Pang Qian suspected she was pregnant because her underpants were stained slightly. Women understood their bodies well. Her period had always been very regular, and now, it was already a week late. She knew that meant she might’ve hit the prize.



When Gu Mingxi accompanied Pang Qian to the hospital, his face was taut. Pang Qian was just worried about whether they'd be able to go on their trip tomorrow. They could get a refund for the plane tickets, but they couldn't for the hotel. It was a lot of money!

There weren't a lot of people going to see the doctor over the Spring Festival. The obstetrician on duty helped Pang Qian with her blood test. An hour later, the doctor told her that she was pregnant. But her progesterone levels were low, so she should be careful and rest for the following few days.

Pang Qian's first question was, "Doctor, I'm going on my honeymoon tomorrow. We have to transfer flights as well. It's a 13 hour ride. Do you think I can fly?"

The doctor raised their eyebrows at her. "What do you think?"

"..." Pang Qian turned to glare at the man at the side, who already seemed to be out of sorts. "It's your fault! Gu Mingxi, I hate you! I hate you!"

When they returned home, Pang Qian looked at the luggage in the living room and the half filled travel bag in the bedroom. Then her tears started falling.

As she cried, she started calling the airline to cancel their tickets. As she cried, she went online to discuss the possibility of getting a refund for their hotel room. She knew that, at most, she'd only be able to get half the money back, so her crying escalated in intensity.

Finally, as she cried, she called her parents. Jin Aihua was extremely startled by Pang Qian's sniffing sounds. She asked, "Qian Qian, what's wrong? Did Mingxi bully you? Did you two fight? Are you still going on your honeymoon tomorrow? Don't cry. Tell me, who wronged you?"

Pang Qian suddenly started crying. "Mom! I'm pregnant! ...(crying sounds)..."

Jin Aihua, "..."

Gu Mingxi stayed right by her side. Wherever she went, he would follow. When she sat down, he would stand by her side. Finally, Pang Qian yelled at him, "Why do you keep following me?! You bastard! I hate you!"

She wiped away her tears. Since there was no one else at home, she could



scream as loud as she wanted. She started to list all her accusations. “It’s all your fault! It was that time! While we were showering, you said you had to do it! You were in such a rush! What for?! Why couldn’t you just wait?! Now... Great! I don’t get my honeymoon anymore! My Fiji... (crying sounds)...”

Gu Mingxi tried to comfort her. “Pang Pang, It was my fault. Don’t cry. Be careful of your health.”

Pang Qian shouted out loud, “What do you know?! I’m pregnant! It’s easy for your emotions to go out of control when you’re pregnant!”

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# Chapter 112 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 112 (Part 1) Won't Ever Leave You

*Pang Pang, if we have a boy, I want to name him Gu Haichuan.*

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Pang Qian cried for a long while before finally stopping, but her lips were still pursed and she ignored Gu Mingxi. Whenever Gu Mingxi walked over to try to talk to her, she wouldn't bother to answer.

Pang Qian had to put away all the things she'd packed up. She had to return things to their original spots and put away their suitcases in the small storage room. How could Gu Mingxi let Pang Qian clean things up? Seeing her bend over to take the clothes out from the suitcase, he tried to convince her to stop. Of course, she didn't listen, so Gu Mingxi's tone grew serious.

"Pang Pang, did you forget what the doctor said? She said that since you were spotting a bit, you should lie down and rest more. Don't you know that crouching down like that is really dangerous? What if something happened and you hurt your body? A miscarriage takes a major toll on a woman's body. When my mom had a miscarriage, she bled a lot, and then she got a gynecological illness and couldn't get pregnant again. You saw it all, so why are you still throwing a tantrum with me right now?!"

When he saw Pang Qian's lip tremble as if she were about to start crying again, Gu Mingxi quickly went to coax her. "It's okay, I know that it's not because you don't want a kid. You're just unhappy that we weren't able to go on our honeymoon. But Wife, we'll still have the chance to go later. We can bring our baby along. Fiji, Greece, Maldives, Egypt, Brazil... Wherever you want to go, I'll go with you."

Pang Qian wasn't happy. "But I'm still young right now! I have a good figure and I'll look good in dresses. After I have a baby, I'll be fat! I might not be able to



wear any of the dresses I bought this time!”

“Then you can buy new ones. I already said that I like when you’re a little more plump.” Gu Mingxi knew that she’d prepared a lot for their honeymoon. Having to cancel suddenly would naturally leave her unhappy. He could only tenderly say, “Listen to me. Go and lie down and rest. Don’t move around too much. Is there something you want to eat? Do you want me to make some desserts?”

Pang Qian pointed at the suitcases. “I’m not done with all the stuff. Looking at it is such an eyesore!”

Gu Mingxi immediately declared, “You go and rest. I’ll put it all away.”

“What about the suitcases?”

“I can take care of it.” He lowered his body and pushed the suitcase with his shoulder. “Go lie down on the bed. Be good.”

Pang Qian finally climbed into bed, albeit somewhat unwillingly.

Gu Mingxi really started to put away the things they’d packed up. For convenience, he pushed the suitcase into the master bedroom with his legs. He sat down on the floor and pulled out the things in the suitcase. After taking out the clothes and swimming suits, he sat down on the bed and put them into the dresser.

He was very meticulous with it all, but it was different from other people. It was troublesome to put the clothes away. Sometimes he would bite onto them, and sometimes he would hold the clothes between his cheek and shoulder. He was only able to carry one or two pieces of clothing at a time, so he had to make several trips back and forth. Finally, he emptied out the suitcase and pulled the zipper closed. He looked around and then got up and lifted the case up with his foot. He moved the suitcase over to the corner by the dresser.

Gu Mingxi’s forehead was covered in a sheen of sweat. He turned around and saw Pang Qian lying on the bed, looking at him. When he was tidying up earlier, her eyes hadn’t left him for a moment. Gu Mingxi smiled at her and asked, “Are you hungry? Want to eat something?”

She shook her head, and suddenly reached her arm out to him. She said, “Gu Mingxi, come here.”



Gu Mingxi walked over to the bed and sat down on the edge. Pang Qian said, "Bring your foot up."

"Mm?" He quickly sat onto the bed and lifted up his foot. He asked, "For what?"

She stroked the back of his foot and then beckoned him to touch her stomach. "Touch the baby."

Gu Mingxi was taken aback and immediately started shaking his head. "My foot is really strong. I'm worried I'll hurt you."

"You won't." She grabbed his foot. Gu Mingxi hesitated for a moment before lightly touching Pang Qian's still-flat abdomen. He held back his strength and only used his toes to touch her.

"Gu Mingxi, you're going to be a dad." Pang Qian's hand was still on his foot. Her fingers stroked some of his old scars and said quietly, "It's really amazing."

Gu Mingxi was worried about something else though. "Pang Pang, can you go to school if you're pregnant?"

"Sure," Pang Qian said. "The doctor said the due date is sometime in October. I'll finish my first year in June and then I can rest during summer break. I won't go back to school in September. After the baby's born, I'll stay home for a year and then the next September, I can go back for my second year. Then we'll be able to graduate together."

While she was resting, she'd thought about a lot of things. But Gu Mingxi was still uneasy. "But we live really far from your school. I'm worried about you driving to school by yourself. And you have to wake up so early. You won't sleep enough."

This really was a problem. Pang Qian thought it over, but she didn't have any ideas either. She said, "We'll talk about it when we're back in Shanghai. Let's try it out. I had an English client before who was pregnant, but she still spent the entire day in Shanghai for a business trip. She looked entirely fine."

"The physical condition of girls in Asia are different from those in Europe. But this is something that depends entirely on the person. Just because 100 people are fine, it doesn't mean that you'll definitely be fine. I don't want there to be



any chances of danger.” Gu Mingxi had this lingering fear from the time that Li Han had miscarried. He couldn’t imagine Pang Qian going through such a thing. With regards to taking care of a pregnant woman, although he had some experience, he was also physically unable to help as much as he’d like. He thought about it for a long time, and even suggested renting a place nearby to Fudan. He could take the subway to school every day. But Pang Qian immediately rejected the idea.

“You worry about me, but I worry about you too,” Pang Qian said. “Do you know how crowded the subways and busses in Shanghai are during rush hour?! Gu Mingxi, I know that you can take public transportation on your own. If it were just one bus, I’d agree to it, but you have to transfer three times! Think about how worried I’d be for you!”

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Pang Shiusheng and Jin Ai’hua hurried back home from Sanya. Pang Qian’s emotions had already been settled and she was quite okay. She happily put on a loose sweater and put away her skinny jeans. She went and bought several pairs of loose sweatpants. Someone who didn’t look at all like a pregnant woman yet walked around with a sway started to actually kind of looked like a pregnant woman.

Her annoyance at being unable to go on a honeymoon soon vanished, replaced by the joy of being a parent. After several hectic days, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi had already prepared themselves to welcome a new life into their world.

When winter break ended, Gu Mingxi’s new book hit the market. It was called ‘The Boy Named Xiaochuan.’

Gu Xiaochuan is a 7 year old boy. The story is about the boy’s search for the mother that had abandoned him, and it leads him to a mysterious village where he meets many strange people and surprising things. Xiaochuan received suspicions and unfair treatment from the townspeople, but he was also met with understanding and friendship. On his journey, he befriends two other kids, Dou Dou and Xiang Xiang. They grow together, and though he isn’t able to find his mother in the end, he was able to help the townspeople through a crisis.

At the end of the book, there was also a preview picture for ‘Xiaochuan 2.’ The



publishing company posted this advertisement: A great book for parents and their children to read together, the perfect gift for a child starting school. A story that brings back the wondrous memories of travel for city folk— Two years after ‘My Miss Crab’ and ‘Lonely Whale,’ Mister Ostrich returns with a heartwarming story, and he says that inside every heart, there exists a Gu Xiaochuan.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stood in front of the bestseller shelf at Xinhua Bookstore. Every once in awhile, someone would pass by and pick up a book. There were adults and children, and even elderly people. A lot of people would eventually walk to the counter with the book in hand.

Pang Qian picked up an unpacked copy of the book and flipped through a few pages. Then she asked Gu Mingxi, “Why did you name the boy Xiaochuan?”

Gu Mingxi looked at the book in her hands; the Xiaochuan in the book was running. He laughed and said, “Pang Pang, if we have a boy, I want to name him Gu Haichuan.”

Pang Qian repeated the name. “Haichuan, Gu Haichuan... Sounds pretty good. What’s this name mean?”

“One hundred rivers into the sea,” he responded. “I hope that he will grow up with an open mind. There’s also another important meaning; it originates from my mom’s name. ‘Han’ means to be inclusive, to show tolerance and forgiveness. I hope our child will be able to inherit my mother’s character and be someone who is forgiving, kind, and honest.” (Note: Read as ‘hai na bai chuan,’ the more literal translation of the name’s explanation is ‘one hundred rivers into the sea,’ or perhaps you might say, ‘all rivers run into the sea.’ As an idiom, it means you can achieve the same result via many different means. It’s also part of a longer phrase that means something like ‘the sea is great because it accepts a hundred rivers, and a person is great when they are tolerant and accepting of others.’)

Pang Qian listened to his explanation as she flipped through the pages of the book. Xiaochuan was a very lively boy. He had shaggy hair and a pair of dark, shining eyes. It reminded her of young Gu Mingxi.

“What if it’s a girl?” Pang Qian asked. “The sea is great because it accepts a hundred rivers, and a person is great when they are tolerant and accepting of



others. Gu Yourong? Or... Gu Naida?” (Note: Mentioned in the previous note—The second half of the phrase is pronounced ‘you rong nai da,’ which is where Pang Qian’s names come from. However, ‘nai da’ is a homophone for ‘big breasts.’)

Gu Mingxi burst out laughing. Pang Qian was also very happy. Gu Mingxi said, “If it’s a girl, let’s call her Gu Lanzhi.”

“Why?” Pang Qian looked bewildered. Gu Mingxi said, “There’s a saying ‘lan zhi chang sheng,’ which means to have a beautiful character (be virtuous). Have you heard it before?”

“No.” Pang Qian asked, “But haven’t you heard that Lanzhi (Laneige) is a Korean makeup brand?”

Gu Mingxi said seriously, “I’ve only heard of Lankou (Lancome).”

Pang Qian said, “Then... Should we call her Gu Lankou?”

“...”

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After school started back up and with some family discussion, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi’s troubles were resolved.

Pang Shuisheng and Jin Aihua went along to Shanghai with the young couple. They rented a small place near Fudan, and from Mondays to Fridays, Jin Aihua would live with Pang Qian at the apartment by Fudan and Pang Shuisheng would live with Gu Mingxi at the Songjiang University Town. On the weekends, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi would spend their time together and Jin Aihua and Pang Shuisheng would enjoy themselves in Shanghai.

And so, the pregnant Pang Qian was able to sleep well at night and didn’t have to rush in the mornings. With Pang Shuisheng’s assistance, Gu Mingxi was also able to live comfortably.

‘Xiaochuan’ was selling better than forecasted, and its online reputation was also pretty good. Several children’s clothing brands also contacted Gu Mingxi about using Xiaochuan’s image on their clothes. Gu Mingxi started preparing for ‘Xiaochuan 2,’ and set up a contract with Jiang Qi stating that he’d submit it by the year’s end.



When they couldn't see each other, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi would call and talk on the phone. Sometimes they even made video calls.

Gu Mingxi asked in detail about her daily diet. Of course he was assured with leaving Pang Qian in Jin Aihua's care, but being unable to stay by his pregnant wife's side really left Gu Mingxi feeling quite guilty and uneasy.

In the first three months of her pregnancy, Pang Qian's morning sickness was rather severe and her vomiting was easily stimulated. When she video called Gu Mingxi, she would start by complaining, "Husband, I want to eat your tomato and beef soup."

"I'll make it for you when you come back on the weekend." Gu Mingxi looked at Pang Qian on his screen. She actually hadn't gotten any fatter. On the contrary, she seemed to have gotten a little thinner. It really made his heart ache. "Wife, what else do you want to eat? I'll make it for you."

"I want to eat stewed chicken feet."

Gu Mingxi was developing a headache. "Wife, the bird flu is really serious right now. Let's forget about the chicken feet for now."

"No, no, I want to eat chicken feet!" Pang Qian was acting cute on the screen.

"Why don't we eat salt and pepper open-back shrimp?"

Pang Qian rolled her eyes and swallowed. "I feel uneasy about you making that. The last time you were cutting open the backs of the shrimp, you cut your toes."

"It was just once, because I was a bit careless. I won't do it again in the future. Wife, do you want to eat it?"

"..." She was very conflicted.

Gu Mingxi said, "Then I'll go buy shrimp on Saturday."

"I also want to eat crab."

"No. The doctor said you can't eat crab while you're pregnant."

"(whining noises?)..."

With the concentrated efforts of her family, the six-month pregnant Pang Qian



was able to smoothly complete her first year of graduate school. The four people packed up and headed back to E City for summer break. Pang Qian had previously set up an appointment, so she went in to the hospital for her 4D ultrasound.

Gu Mingxi had always gone along with Pang Qian for checkups and parenting classes. As he saw the little speck grow into a baby from the ultrasound reports, as he heard the strength of the baby's heartbeat and found out that the baby was developing well, Gu Mingxi felt an indescribable emotion.

It's like the things you yearned for in your dreams suddenly became real. That feeling of excitement, joy, gratefulness, and even worry wasn't something you could understand if you'd never experienced it before.

Pang Qian's stomach was showing quite obviously by now, and she'd gotten a bit plump as well. She laid down on the exam bed and Gu Mingxi sat beside her.

When the image of the baby appeared on the screen, Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were so excited that they nearly forgot to breathe. The baby was moving and there was a smile on his little face. Pang Qian's hand gripped tightly onto Gu Mingxi's shoulder. The two of them were overcome with happiness and satisfaction. The doctor said, "The baby's very healthy. Look, he's biting his own hand... Look at his little feet. His bones are very soft, so his foot can even bend up to his mouth..."

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi stared foolishly at the screen. That was their child, their successor, the fruition of a labor of love. Because of his existence, their life would change a lot and they would gain a lot more responsibilities.

When they left the hospital, Gu Mingxi despaired a bit. Pang Qian's hand was wrapped around his waist. She asked, "What's wrong?"

"I still can't get over it, after seeing the baby." He smiled and then said, "I was thinking, the baby looks so cute. But after he's born, as his father, I won't be able to carry him. Will he blame me for it when he gets older?"

"You're looking down on our baby a bit too much. He wouldn't." Pang Qian stopped in her steps and hugged Gu Mingxi. "Kids are very smart. Don't worry. When his parents love him this much, he'll be able to feel it. He'll be proud of you, just like me."



Gu Mingxi smiled. He lowered his head and kissed Pang Qian’s forehead.  
“Thank you, Wife.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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# Chapter 112 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Part 4. My Heart, Like the Sea 112 (Part 2) Won't Ever Leave You

*Pang Pang, if we have a boy, I want to name him Gu Haichuan.*

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August 13, 2013, Qixi, was Gu Mingxi's 29th birthday. It was also Pang Qian's 28th birthday. On this day, something rather special to them happened. That is, the film, 'My Miss Crab' premiered in theaters nationwide.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian went to the theater. Because it was the first showing in E City, the production held an event at theaters. Any couple that bought tickets could get a free crab or ostrich fridge magnet if they kissed at the theater.

With her big belly, Pang Qian just grabbed Gu Mingxi for a kiss, right out in public. Gu Mingxi's face reddened, and Pang Qian happily picked up an ostrich magnet. Then she asked the employee, "There's another in my belly. Can I get a crab too?"

The employee laughed, and then really gave her one.

As they headed inside, Gu Mingxi laughed at her. "If you wanted a magnet, I could go ask and we could get a box of them without a problem."

Pang Qian said, "You don't get it. It's only meaningful if we get it ourselves!"

After they bought popcorn and drinks, they headed into the theater. It was already about 80% full of people. For a small-scale film like this, such a turnout was already decent.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat in the back row. Because Pang Qian's 'volume' was too big, they didn't sit in the couple seats. They sat to the side, and like the rest of the audience, they chat and munched on popcorn while waiting for the movie to start.



The lights went dim, a few commercials played, and then the movie started.

The screen panned to show an '80s street with a factory, a dorm, and young men and women in corduroy jackets and white bell-bottoms, their hair done up. The Little Tigers 'Green Apple Paradise' (YT: song) floated through the streets.

6 year old Fang Xiaotuo and Pang Qingqing were holding hands and running across the factory compound. They were a pair of childhood friends. They often bickered and quarreled, but they would make up very quickly. (Note: 'tuo' from 'tuoniao' meaning ostrich, and 'pang' from 'pangxie' meaning crab)

Fang Xiaotuo was a smart and pretty boy, with a pair of big and bright eyes. When he smiled, two silkworms appeared beneath his eyes (the skin/fat under some's eyes?), and he looked prettier than a girl. Pang Qingqing's only friend was Fang Xiaotuo, but Fang Xiaotuo had numerous friends. Pang Qingqing would stand in the corner quietly, as Fang Xiaotuo played with his other friends, her eyes filled with disappointment.

Pang Qian said to Gu Mingxi, "The actor they chose for the boy is really good looking."

Gu Mingxi whispered back, "I think the girl is a lot like you."

"In what way?"

"She's fat."

"..."

A car accident changed Fang Xiaotuo's fate. Pang Qingqing had rushed out into the street to pick up a ball when a car suddenly drove up. Just in time, Fang Xiaotuo pushed Pang Qingqing out of the way, but then the car rolled over him.

The audience in the theater collectively gasped. This was something that the readers of the original book wouldn't have expected, because in the book, Gu Mingxi had only said that Mister Ostrich had been hit by an illness at the age of 6. In later illustrations, he had used the images of an ostrich and a crab to represent the characters. When he drew images of the young boy and girl, they both appeared very healthy, and he'd never once mentioned that Mister Ostrich was physically disabled.



The nerves in Fang Xiaotuo's hands were severely damaged, so although he still had his hands, they were paralyzed. From then on, he helplessly (or reluctantly) started to use his feet in place of his hands.

When Fang Xiaotuo's mother burst into tears on the floor, there were already several girls in the audience crying along.

Pang Qian turned to Gu Mingxi and fed him some popcorn. She whispered, "Did they change it this way because an arm-less character would be hard to act?"

"Probably," he whispered back. "For most actors, hiding their arms would be pretty hard. The screenwriter did a good job with the change."

"Then will the actor use his legs to do things?"

"There's not too much of that in the movie. As long as he's flexible, the actor should be able to do simple things."

"That's true."

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And the story continued.

Fang Xiaotuo and Pang Qingqing entered elementary school, and sometimes a naughty boy would bully Fang Xiaotuo. Then Pang Qingqing would start fighting them like a little lioness. She always accompanied Fang Xiaotuo to and from school. She helped him get his meals, tie his shoelaces, and carry his umbrella. The two of them slowly grew up and entered junior high. Fang Xiaotuo grew up into a pretty 14 year old youth. Pang Qingqing had also grown up into a beautiful young girl. And then, she developed a crush on a popular boy—Ouyang Chengye.

Pang Qian suddenly choked on her drink. "Ouyang Chengye? Seriously?! Who picked that name?!"

Gu Mingxi's shoulders shook from laughing. "I really want to see what his reaction will be when he sees this."

"Hahaha, he'd probably vomit blood!"

Ouyang Chengye was a cool and handsome rich kid, and there were countless girls who liked him. Pang Qingqing fell into a whirlpool of puppy love, completely



unable to see Fang Xiaotuo by her side.

Fang Xiaotuo had always helped Pang Qingqing with her studies, and with his help, she was finally able to get into a top high school. Fang Xiaotuo's father had an affair.

There were many situations that Gu Mingxi hadn't explained in detail in his book, but the scriptwriters filled in story with their imagination. For example, in the cases of Mr Fang's affair, Mrs Fang's collapse, Ouyang Chengye liking another girl, but pretending to like and pursue Pang Qingqing.

The young Pang Qingqing couldn't resist the wealthy prince, and she finally agreed to date him. Dejected, Fang Xiaotuo quietly slipped out of her life. But accidentally, he discovered that Ouyang Chengye was just using Pang Qingqing, and then Fang Xiaotuo got very angry.

Despite his physical handicap, he went to fight Ouyang. On a rainy day, the two of them rolled around on the ground, getting covered in mud. Coupled with an emotion stirring melody, the image created a great impact. Fang Xiaotuo couldn't fight Ouyang with his hands, so he could only kick him. In a moment, Ouyang took him down and had his fists ready to punch. Fang Xiaotuo couldn't hide or dodge, so he could only glare angrily in the rain.

Pang Qian asked Gu Mingxi, "Tell me the truth. At that time, did you want to beat up Xie Yi?"

"No."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Looks like you didn't like me enough."

"Xie Yi didn't trick you about anything," Gu Mingxi said. "If he did, I definitely wouldn't have let him go."

After high school ended, the classic picture frame story appeared.

Fang Xiaotuo stood all alone at the tree where he and Pang Qingqing often played. It was the middle of the dark night and the rain was pouring down. There, he waited and waited for Little Crab who never came.



The light sobbing in the movie theater had already become a repressed cry. In the midst of the crying sounds, there came the particularly unexpected sound of Pang Qian's laughter.

"Hahahaha..." She was really laughing as she watched the foolish, young Fang Xiaotuo, pitifully crying in the rain. Pang Qian nearly fainted from her laughter.

"Stop laughing. Everyone's looking at you," Gu Mingxi told her.

Pang Qian's tears had come out from laughing. She rubbed her belly and then looked around at the tear-filled eyes of the female audience around her. She apologized, "Sorry, sorry. I couldn't help myself."

She grabbed Gu Mingxi's ear and asked, "When you were waiting for me that day, did you really cry?"

"..." Could he deny that?

"Gu Mingxi... Ah..." Then Pang Qian gently rubbed her stomach again. "Baby, don't learn from your dad. If you like someone, just tell them directly. Why torture yourself? He caused your mom and dad to miss out on so many years."

Gu Mingxi, "..."

In the years that Fang Xiaotuo and Pang Qingqing were separated, He suffered a great deal, but he never cried. The only time he cried was when his mother passed away.

To create a sensational effect, the film created an accident that caused Mrs Fang's death.

Because Fang Xiaotuo's hands were disabled, all the housework was taken care of by his mother. When she climbed up a ladder to change a light bulb, she slipped and fell down.

Fang Xiaotuo had been watching from the side the entire time, but he'd been unable to grab onto the ladder or to catch his mother. He could only watch as she fell to the ground.

"I hate this screenwriter," Pang Qian said.

Gu Mingxi nodded, "I don't like it either."



He let out a sigh and turned to kiss her forehead. "I can't imagine what it would be like if you were to get hurt because I didn't have arms. I think I really wouldn't be able to forgive myself."

"We wouldn't be so unlucky." Pang Qian laughed. "I can take care of myself. But life, you know, it comes with its own share of bumps. No matter where I fall, you can't blame yourself. I don't think I have to say this to you. You should already understand it all."

"Mm, I do."

While they were talking, the rest of the audience was crying their hearts out. The entire theater was in sorrow. Pang Qian could barely stand to see it.

"What's there to cry about?" she asked quietly. "Isn't it just a movie?"

Gu Mingxi said, "You cry when you watch cartoons. How can you say that about others."

"I do not!"

The female viewer beside them turned, her eyes misty, and she said, "Be quiet! (crying sounds)..."

Pang Qian, "Sorry, sorry."

The kiss on the cinema screen was so romantic and poignant that it made the viewers' hearts ache.

Pang Qingqing stood at her school's gate, but after a day of waiting, Fang Xiaotuo didn't show up.

From morning until noon, noon until dusk, dusk until midnight, pedestrians and cars continued to pass by Pang Qingqing. Still, she stood there stubbornly, the crab key chain she planned to gift Fang Xiaotuo clenched tightly in her hand. In the end, her slender figure was the only one left on the street.

The female audience members around Pang Qian were pulling out tissues as they said, "How can Ostrich be so cruel?! What kinds of things can't they have gotten through together?! Crab too, if she liked him, she should just say so. If she doesn't, how is he supposed to know?!"

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, "..."



After the long separation, the sweetness begins. A magical scene appeared on the screen.

Gu Mingxi looked at the large screen and was shocked to see the outdoor coffee shop that he and Pang Qian had reunited at. He knew that it must have been Jiang Qi's doing.

Pang Qingqing walked up the stairs and stood at the side, looking out at the terrace.

There was only one person sitting at the tables there.

His back faced her. He wore a white shirt and he had dark hair.

A slight breeze blew and his shirt sleeves billowed. Even his hair flew around a bit.

His head was lowered and his shoulders trembled. Pang Qingqing smiled and walked toward him.

Step by step by step.

Finally, she arrived behind him. She saw his curled up hands, those familiar hands that had lost their function to save her.

She bent over and stretched out her arms, wrapping them gently around him from behind.

The film was reaching a climax as the audience's emotions peaked and the entire theater was full of crying sounds. But this crying was unlike that from the sad scenes. This time, the audience was letting out tears of happiness.

Only Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi sat calmly in their seats. They didn't drink anything or eat any popcorn. Her hand rested on his thigh, and the two of them almost devoutly celebrated this reunion.

Fang Xiaotuo and Pang Qingqing's story ended with a romantic wedding on the lawn as balloons floated into the sky. All the people who had helped them throughout the film came to their wedding. Fang Xiaotuo wore a white suit, tall and handsome, like a perfect prince. The beautiful Pang Qingqing held his hands, tiptoed, and gave him a tender kiss.



The camera slowly panned away from their faces and chased a red balloon into the sky.

Some words appeared on the screen.

—Dedicated to everyone who enjoys life. We hope you'll find your Miss Crab or Mister Ostrich.

No one in the theater was crying anymore. With all the difficulty and hardship gone, everyone was enjoying the sweetness. In the theater, there was only person who was crying like a child. She didn't try to suppress her voice, and everyone around her looked at her strangely as they handed towels over.

Nearly three decades of emotion from her life had been concentrated into 90 minutes. For others, this might just be a movie, a story. But for Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi, this was their reality.

Still, after the movie ended, life had to move on. Their wonderful life had just begun.

The lights turned back on, and Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian got ready to leave.

Pang Qian grabbed onto the armrests to help herself up. Her waist felt very sore. She pat Gu Mingxi's shoulder and said, "Let me hold onto you as I walk. I sat too long so all my bones hurt."

"Should we find somewhere to sit outside for awhile, to rest?" Gu Mingxi asked with concern.

"No, I just sat for too long. I'll be fine after we walk a bit."

Her eyes were still red as she grabbed onto Gu Mingxi's shoulder and they walked out. Beside them, there was another couple, and the woman was also wiping away her tears. Her boyfriend kept comforting her, "Alright, don't cry. It's just a movie. In the end, they got married. It wasn't a tragedy."

"What do you know?!" As the woman said this, her eyes fell onto Gu Mingxi's receding figure. She wiped her eyes and looked more carefully. She realized that there were no arms in his plaid blue shirt.

The woman didn't know what to say as she watched Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walk off. She said to her boyfriend, "Did you see that couple just then? The



woman had a big tummy and the man, he was just like Mister Ostrich in the movie. His arms were disabled.”

“Disabled?”

“It was more serious that Mister Ostrich. He actually didn’t have any arms.” The woman pointed at her own shoulder. “It started here, and then that was it. He didn’t have any arms at all.”

The man shook his head. “I didn’t pay attention.”

The woman thought about it some more and then said, “You said that it was just a movie, but seeing the couple just then, I believe that this story exists in real life too. They looked very in love. I hope that man will be like Mister Ostrich and live happily ever after.”

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi walked outside. Pang Qian kept one hand on his shoulder and held her waist with the other. They walked slowly and stepped up to a row of stores. A song floated out from somewhere and she laughed. “Gu Mingxi, listen, it’s this song.”

My heart is like the sea  
Gentle at times, but also fierce  
In this impermanent life  
I’ll stay with you and never leave  
I want to sing out loudly  
And no one can stop me  
I’ll share it together with you  
All the happiness and sadness in this life  
Our love will keep on growing  
Keep on giving and no longer hide  
All the setbacks and hopes that belong to us  
They’re like the dew that lets the flowers bloom

[End of Part 4]

– My Mister Ostrich –



# Side Story 1 (1)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Side Story 1 How Much I Envy You (1/4)

*Martin's not my boyfriend.*

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After a simple discussion with several teachers in the small conference room, Daisy scurried over to me before I could return to my office. “Hey! Dr. Xiao, I finally found you! Gary’s crying a fit right now! Hurry and check up on him. We can’t handle it!”

I immediately followed after her to the consultation room. I asked, “What’s wrong with Gary?”

“He hasn’t gotten used to it.” Daisy gestured at her right arm. “He keeps feeling that it hurts.”

I nodded and entered the room. The 7 year old Gary was currently crying in his mother’s arms, and my two female colleagues were standing at the side, helpless in the face of this crisis.

After Gary saw me, he seemed to grow more aggrieved. He cried out loudly, his face a puddle of tears.

“Leave it to me,” I told Daisy. I walked over to his side and sat down. With a smile, I said, “Who’s this crying so much? Could it be our little Superman, Gary?”

Gary was a pretty little boy with brown, curly hair and big green eyes. He looked at me, blinking, with beads of tears on his long eyelashes. Sniffling, he said, “Jodie, you lied to me! This arm isn’t good to use at all! It hurts so much!”

A year ago, Gary lost his right arm in a car accident. When his parents brought him in to get fitted for a prosthetic, he was extremely dejected. But for some reason, the little kid and I got along quite well. When the staff was measuring the size of his stump, he was very uncooperative. I went over to see what was



happening after he started crying. After getting caught up on the situation, I tried to talk to Gary a bit. Only then was he willing to take off his clothes so we could get a mold for his stump.

“You can call me Jodie,” I told Gary at that time. “Lovely Gary, only the bravest kids get the chance to put on this super cool arm. I don’t agree to help everyone who comes asking for one. For example, people who love to cry. Oh... I really don’t like them.”

Gary was crying like a kitten. “Jodie, will I really be able to have a new arm?”

“Of course,” I told him with a smile.

After arriving in America, I studied biomedical engineering. After my PhD, my specialty was focused on intelligent prosthetics. Although most patients who come in, like Little Gary, will choose myoelectric prosthetics that respond to EMG activity (Note: electrical activity from skeletal muscles), I and my advisor and research associates are striving to tackle intelligent prosthetics that respond to human brain and nerve signals.

On Gary’s right shoulder, there remained a 10cm length stump. He was young and hadn’t adapted to the use of prosthetics. It was probably an emotional rejection. He periodically came to our institute for rehabilitation and training. He learned to use the prosthetic to drink water, to turn pages of a book, to eat, to pick up and place objects... I knew that this type of prosthetic wouldn’t allow him to perform very precise movements. For example, he wouldn’t be able to fold a (paper) lucky star, and he would be unable to use this fake arm to write. But I still patiently advised him.

“Can you pick up the cup for me, Gary?”

I encouraged him and watched him. Gary really tried to lift the cup of water for me. He was still in the adaptation phase for the prosthetic, so its appearance didn’t look like that of human skin. It looked like a metal skeleton, with lots of wires, connected to metallic fingers.

With ours and Gary’s efforts, this object that was completely lacking in vitality became a very magical part of his body. It wasn’t alive, and it wasn’t filled with things that were in human bodies, but it could move.



The arm could move. The elbow could move. The wrist could move. Even the fingers could move.

Gary's arm trembled as he picked up the cup of water and handed it to me. I immediately accepted it and applauded him.

"You're so awesome, Gary! You've made a lot of progress!" I gave him a hug and he raised his left arm to return the hug, his right arm moving slightly.

"Hey, don't be shy," I told him.

Gary's face reddened and his brows furrowed as he exerted effort. He finally raised his right arm and completed his hug.

"You simply couldn't be better!" I gently pat his head. "Gary, I know that in the beginning it's a little hard, but trust me, it'll get better with time. Maybe one day, you'll play basketball like Kobe Bryant. He's your role model, isn't he?"

Gary nodded his head sheepishly. Then he said, "But Jodie, don't you think this arm looks really ugly?"

I feigned surprise. "How could I? I think it's really cool!"

"Next time I come, will you visit me again?"

"Sure, but you also have to listen to Daisy." I pulled Daisy over and told Gary, "She's a super amazing doctor, and she'll teach you how to use your new arm. I'm definitely not as good as her with that."

Gary finally agreed to let Daisy and the other staff members help him practice using his prosthetic arm. After I said goodbye with him, I heard some angry shouts from the rehabilitation hall.

At a place like this, people often lost control of their emotions. A healthy person suddenly losing one of their limbs because of an illness or an accident would naturally find it hard to accept at first. All of our staff understand that, but this man's shouts were a bit excessive.

I couldn't help walking over. I spotted him immediately among more than twenty rehab patients and the physiotherapist. He was a tall, young man, wearing a prosthetic left leg. He was leaning against the parallel bars as he shouted at the therapist.



I walked over to him and realized that although his hair and eyes were dark brown, his features were obviously East Asian.

He was still shouting when I attempted to calm him down. “Sir, please relax.”

He turned to look at me, his eyes showing surprise. Then he shouted again, “Who are you?! Mind your own business!”

I wore a light blue uniform and said, “My name is Xiao and I work here. I know that you’re going through a lot of difficulties, but sir, you’re a grown adult. There are many children here and they’ve gone through disastrous things as well, but aren’t they working hard to do well? Not only aren’t you setting a good example, you’re even scaring them.”

What I said wasn’t false. In the rehab hall, there were many kids wearing prosthetic legs, practicing to walk. A lot of the kids looked over at the man, a frightened expression on their faces.

His expression turned awkward and he clenched his jaw. After he stared at me awhile, he asked me in English, “Are you Chinese? Or Japanese, Korean?”

“Chinese,” I responded.

And then in standard Beijing dialect, he said, “If you were standing in my shoes, you wouldn’t say that.”

I decided to ignore him.

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After I returned to my office, I made a cup of coffee. Wendy knocked on my door and said a package arrived for me from China.

Somewhat coincidentally, I walked over to the counter and opened the package. It was a book and a card.

“My Miss Crab,” I read the book name out loud. Then I saw the author, Mister Ostrich. A ‘boom’ went off in my mind as I started to feel a bit unsure about who and where I was.

I opened the card. It was Xie Yi’s handwriting.

Dear Jodie,  
Merry Christmas!



Do you like the gift? We found him.

–Martin

Christmas 2010

I carried the book back to my office. As I passed by the rehab hall, the angry man from earlier was walking out. During the rehab session, he had been wearing gym shorts and his left leg was amputated. His thigh was connected to a stump-receiving chamber with a pylon underneath, like a leg bone. After the session finished, he changed into a black coat and jeans. If not for the crutch he was using, I probably wouldn't have realized that he was missing a leg.

He'd already calmed down a great deal by then. He glanced over at me with a long face. I smiled and then walked back into my office.

When I was getting off work, Wendy and Daisy both called after me, "Dr. Xiao, it's Christmas soon. Ada said we'd have dinner together tonight. You should come too!"

I put on my coat and shook my head. "Thanks, but I have an appointment tonight."

Daisy giggled and said, "Are you going to video chat with your handsome boyfriend in Beijing?"

I couldn't help laughing. "Martin's not my boyfriend."

"Please, he's already come here several times to see you."

"Regretfully, there's just no chemistry between him and I." I grabbed my bag and put on my scarf, and then walked out with them. After locking the door, I said, "Moreover, he already has a girlfriend."

December in New York was as cold as in E City, if not colder.

I walked across the icy parking lot and drove my car home. The first thing I did when I got inside was pick up my cat.

I picked up (adopted?) this cat. It was yellow and white without an obvious breed. I named it Ah Miao, and since I gave it a Chinese name, I spoke to it in Chinese. This American Ah Miao answered really well, seemingly having grasped onto the language well.



I lived by myself at a building near the school. I'd bought the house because I planned to live there for a long time. The subject I was studying would need a lot of time, so I wouldn't be able to roam around like my parents had. My dad was a zoologist and my mom was a veterinarian. The place they moved to was poor and remote, and they often ran into dangers. I used to want to live that kind of life, but the present me wanted to stay in one of the most developed countries in the world to further the studies of smart prosthetics.

I made myself a bowl of noodles and vegetable soup for dinner. Afterwards, I filled the tub with water and took a bath. Then I changed into my pajamas and crawled under the covers.

I read 'My Miss Crab,' and when I finished, I sat on my bed and sent Xie Yi an email on my laptop.

I told him I received the gift and thanked him.

His name immediately popped up on Skype and I answered his call.

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"I just got to the office," Xie Yi said clearly. "What are you doing?"

"I just got into bed," I said. "Oh yeah, where's he been all these years?"

He knew who I was talking about and quickly responded, "Sanya, in Hainan."

"Oh..." It clicked for me. That was a place with a warm climate, and he hated cold winters.

"Crab's going to see him in a few days," Xie Yi said. "We're planning on giving him a Christmas surprise."

He'll definitely be happy, I thought.

"Not bad." I asked, "How have you been lately?"

"The same. You?"

"Also the same. Busy with work."

"Will you come home next year for New Year's?"

I thought for a moment. "Why do you ask?"

"Crab's planning on bringing Gu Mingxi home then. If you came back too, we



could have a big party.”

“I’m not sure,” I said. “We’ll talk about it when the time gets closer.”

Xie Yi suddenly said, “Jodie, you don’t have any questions you want to ask me?”

I rolled my eyes. “How are you and your girlfriend?”

“We broke up,” he responded very quickly.

I was left speechless.

Countless people had asked me before, ‘Jodie, why don’t you accept Martin?’ Or they’d say, ‘Xiao Yujing, why don’t you accept Xie Yi?’

The reason they ask that is because Xie Yi was really too perfect.

So perfect that you couldn’t find any flaws.

Once, I asked him, ‘Xie Yi, if you could use one animal to describe yourself, what would you choose?’

He said, ‘An eagle.’

In the story of ‘My Miss Crab,’ there were two supporting characters. Miss Antelope, who was myself, and the other was Mister Peacock.

I don’t know if that was Gu Mingxi teasing Xie Yi or not, but I felt that, regardless of whether it was an eagle or a peacock, they couldn’t be likened to Xie Yi.

He was a very, very good person. With an eye-catching appearance and a superior family background, but he didn’t carry the usual arrogant demeanor of rich kids. He studied hard and worked hard. If I had to name a flaw of his, it would probably be that other people see him as a bit whimsical, doing as he pleases.

Xie Yi never forced himself to do anything he didn’t want to. In that respect, he and I are very alike.

But where we differ is that he would always put his life on the line to do the things he wanted to do, whereas I would come to a decision to act or retreat after careful consideration.



That was the reason I rejected him.

He's great, but I don't love him.

Ah Miao jumped onto my bed and purred at my laptop. I sneezed and said, "Xie Yi, I'm going to sleep."

I laid on the bed and Ah Miao settled down beside me. I was very tolerant with him, so if he wanted to sleep together on the bed, I didn't shoo him away. (Note: The author doesn't specify whether the cat is male or female. I simply adopted 'he' because using 'it' sounded strange in English.)

I pet Ah Miao, who appeared very comfortable, meowing lazily. Lying in the dark room, I couldn't go to sleep. For some reason, I suddenly thought about that summer day so many years ago.

The first time I saw Gu Mingxi was the first day of school. There was a strange desk in the last row of the classroom. One side was a normal height, but the other half was shorter.

The rest of the class and I were all very curious, unsure of the purpose of that desk. Until Gu Mingxi came into the room.

That boy had a pair of doe eyes, pure and clear, calm. He didn't seem to fear the class' eyes on him. He just walked toward that particular desk and sat down.

There was already a girl sitting on the other side. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail and she had a smiling face. The boy walked over and wriggled his shoulders, and then his backpack fell onto his desk. Then he sat down and took off his shoes, resting his feet on his desk.

He lowered his head, and naturally tidied up his backpack with his feet. His two shirt sleeves swung around by his sides. He would occasionally say a few things to the girl beside him. I watched for awhile before turning back to the front.

During the military training, I remembered his name.

Gu Mingxi.

Mister Ostrich.

— My Mister Ostrich —



# Side Story 1 (2)

– My Mister Ostrich –

## Side Story 1 How Much I Envy You (2/4)

*Don't cut it. You look good with long hair.*

---

When I was younger, I lived in South Africa. My dad often went away for business trips across the African continent. My mother and I stayed in Cape Town awaiting his safe return each time.

South Africa was one of the more developed countries in Africa. There was more diversity, and education there was better than much of the continent. I would go to school with all the other little kids, and then I'd study Chinese at home with my mom.

When my dad returned, he would tell me about all the things he'd heard and seen when he was away. Interesting things, thrilling things, difficult situations, magical things... Listening to the stories, I felt almost intoxicated. He showed me the pictures he took. Sometimes he would stay in the field with his team for a very long time, just to observe the habits of zebra or antelope. He told me about how a lion hunted a zebra. He told me that this was a world where the strong preyed on the weak, and if you didn't want to get eaten, you'd have to make yourself stronger.

I was completely amazed with the fantastical world. During summer vacation, Dad would take me and Mom along with him to work. The first time that I sat in the off-road SUV and saw the vast African savannah filled with droves of animals, I was shocked. For the first time in my life, I felt the insignificance of humankind.

Once, when I followed my dad's team out to the field, we came across an area covered with animal carcasses, left after a large fight. From the remains, one of the scientists supposed that it was a fight between some lions and a group of hyenas.



On the battlefield, my dad and his team found a dying baby lion in the heap of hyena corpses. It was heavily injured, left behind by its pack. It had likely survived a few days by eating the rotting flesh remains.

Dad brought the little lion back to our camp. It wasn't really that small, but Dad said that it was still young. Its body was covered in scars. In order to protect its life, the accompanying veterinarian amputated a limb.

The little lion's entire right-side front leg was amputated. Its right-side hind leg was also missing a chunk. When I saw at it, it was wrapped up in gauze, asleep from the anesthesia. I asked my dad when it would get better, when it could return home.

My dad told me that it would never be able to go home.

A major predator on the food chain, still young and missing a leg. If it was released back to the wild, the only end for it was death.

At the time, the film 'The Lion King' was sweeping the globe. My dad told me that his team stole the name and called their little lion Simba.

Simba followed us back to South Africa and was handed over to a zoo in Cape Town. Afterwards, Derrick and I often went to visit it. All by itself in a cage, it looked very lonely.

Watching Simba limping around with difficulty, its front leg missing, I grabbed onto the railing and felt a strange sense of loss.

Derrick was the boy who lived next door to us. He was white and a year older than me. He had blond hair and a pair of deep blue eyes. We were good friends. Derrick told me that, on our street, I was the most particular kid.

It was true that I was the only Chinese girl in our neighborhood, with straight, black hair and a pair of dark eyes. Derrick said that I looked like a fairy, and I was the prettiest girl he'd ever seen.

My concept of aesthetics was likely formed around that time. With regards to people's appearances, I'd never had any particular preferences. When I returned to China, I'd often heard the neighbor girls say that black people looked disgusting. I found that outrageous. In my memories, the black kid next door when I lived in Cape Town, Arno, was brave and cute. Often times, I preferred to



play with Arno instead of Derrick.

I started learning violin at a young age, along with Derrick. I wasn't very good, but Derrick often received the teacher's praise. Mom had asked me before, 'Xiao Jing, do you dislike playing violin? If you don't like it, you don't have to keep taking lessons.'

I told her, "I don't dislike it."

My mom was a bit suspicious. "Then why don't you practice more?"

I thought it was strange. "Who said that I don't practice?"

I clearly practiced very diligently. It's just that I wasn't as good as Derrick, but that didn't say anything about my enthusiasm for playing the violin. I practiced every day. Derrick would knock on my window and rest on the window sill, saying, "Jodie, your violin playing sounds bad."

I would quietly push his hands away and lock the window before continuing to play the violin.

Only Arno said that my violin playing was nice. He was from Nigeria, with dark skin and big, bright eyes like two big grapes. Because of his dad's work, they had just moved to South Africa a few years before. He said that when he listened to me play violin, it reminded him of home, back in Nigeria.

When I was 12 years old, an epidemic started spreading through several countries in Africa. For my and my mother's safety, my dad accepted a work transfer and prepared to take us back to China.

I told Derrick that I was going back to China. After being startled for a moment, he finally said, "Jodie, I love you. I will miss you."

I told Arno that I was going back to China, and he blinked a few times before silently heading home.

That evening, Arno came over and knocked on my window. He handed me something.

It was an African drum.

It had a strange body with some complex carvings on it.



Arno told me that the drum was handcrafted by his grandfather when he was younger. Even the skin used for the drumhead were from the animals that his grandfather personally hunted.

“Jodie, I’m giving this drum to you.” When Arno opened his lips in the dark of the night, his shining white teeth and eyes were very conspicuous. He said, “My grandpa told me that this is a magical drum. He gave the drum to my grandma and they got married later. My dad gave my mom this drum, and then they also got married. My grandpa told me that if I give this to the girl that I love, we’ll be together in the end.”

I felt that I couldn’t accept such a precious gift. Arno looked a bit crestfallen. He asked, “Jodie, do you not like me?”

No, I liked him.

I accepted the drum and held it tightly. Arno smiled and said, “I’ll come teach you how to play it tomorrow, okay?”

“Okay,” I said.

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Later on, I followed my parents back to China. The first summer vacation, I started to practice the drum at home, but the neighbors ended up complaining.

My mom said that this wasn’t Cape Town and implored of me to stop playing the drum. Then I begged my dad to let me call Arno’s house. I wanted to play the drum for him. But then came the despairing news.

Arno had been infected with a virus. A month ago, after treatment failed, he passed away.

That was the most heart-aching summer day of my life.

The day that Year 1 (of high school) finished, I gave the drum that Arno gave me to Gu Mingxi. I knew that a few minutes later, he would give that drum to Pang Qian.

If this drum from Africa was really as magical as Arno said, then, one day, a pair of lovers would finally end up together because of it.

After Year 2 started, Pang Qian was no longer in our class because of the class



restructuring. Teacher Dai asked Gu Mingxi and me about our opinions, and then we became deskmates.

Gu Mingxi didn't speak much. After the 'Outstanding Student' incident, he became much more quiet and solemn. And perhaps it had to do with the fact that Pang Qian was no longer by his side.

Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song would help Gu Mingxi with some of his daily needs, but otherwise, he would use his own two feet to slowly take care of his own matters. He rarely asked me to help him. And I didn't offer my help either. At lunch, he would still eat together with Pang Qian. When we lined up in the cafeteria, I often saw the two of them together, standing at the window. Pang Qian carried two lunch boxes and pointed at the food behind the glass, asking Gu Mingxi what he wanted to eat.

Only when he was with Pang Qian would Gu Mingxi's expression relax and be at ease. He would smile and discuss with Pang Qian about which dishes were better.

The image of them eating together was still clear in my mind. They sat across from each other, a lunch box for each of them. Pang Qian would steal Gu Mingxi's food, and Gu Mingxi would help her eat the things she didn't like.

One person used their hands, the other used their feet. They picked at each others' lunches with their spoons. That kind of intimacy and understanding was like an invisible wall, keeping everyone else out.

So I didn't interact much with Gu Mingxi.

Perhaps to other people, I was a very strange person. I didn't really have any friends in the class. I didn't understand what the girls in class would chat about. The comics and celebrities that they liked, fashionable clothing, I didn't know about any of it.

I always kept my hair short and wore a pair of large glasses. My clothes were very ordinary, a t-shirt and jeans. I knew that I wasn't a girl who would catch anyone's eye, but I didn't care about that at all. After I returned to China, everyone said I was very refined. At first, I didn't know what that word meant. After I understood it, I was a bit surprised, and also relieved.



What right did I have to say that Gu Mingxi didn't speak much? I was clearly the mystery to everyone.

I was short, even shorter than Pang Qian. That's why I always sat in the front row in class. When I became deskmates with Gu Mingxi was the first time that I sat in the back of the room.

I sat at Pang Qian's old spot, and I found out that it was really an interesting seat. In the back corner of the classroom, with a window beside me, I could clearly see the schoolyard below.

Zhou Nanzhong and Wang Song who sat in front of us were both very tall. Sometimes, I suspected that if I played around behind them, the teacher wouldn't even be able to see me.

After being deskmates with Gu Mingxi for two weeks, I realized that he wasn't stuffy at all. Sometimes he would do some interesting things, just like other kids.

For example, when he was tired of working on practice problems, he would start to draw a bit. Just like other boys his age, he liked to draw big-breasted, small-waisted, long-legged girls and strong, muscular guys. Other times, it would be robots and monsters. He would start sketching on the paper, hunched over, head down, his body leaning slightly to the right. He used his left foot to block the drawing, seemingly not wanting for me to see.

So of course I pretended not to see. Still, I couldn't help myself from looking. After he drew for awhile, Gu Mingxi would return to doing his practice problems. He folded up the paper he drew on and stuffed it into his desk.

More than once I saw him sketching out a girl. The girl would sometimes be standing, sometimes sitting, sometimes jumping, or looking back. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail, and her face always carried a bright smile.

I rested my chin in my hands and secretly watched him draw. I really wanted to remind him that Pang Qian's chest wasn't that big, that her waist wasn't so small, and she didn't have long legs like that.

But of course, I didn't say anything.

For the Autumn sports festival in Year 2, I ran the 800m. Pang Qian participated in her class' 4x100m relay. From the stands, I watched as she



slipped away and joined our class. She sat down next to Gu Mingxi and started chatting with him.

“It’s so hot.” She separated her hair and braided it. She turned and saw me. Then she said to Gu Mingxi, “Ah, do you think I should cut my hair? Like Xiao Yujing’s. It’ll be easier to wash and better to stay cool.”

Gu Mingxi stared for a moment. Then he shook his head and said quietly, “Don’t cut it. You look good with long hair.”

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After Christmas, I saw that angry man again in the rehab hall.

He didn’t shout anymore, but was diligently practicing to walk. The t-shirt on his body was covered in sweat. After training a bit, he would quietly say a few words to his physical therapist. With furrowed brows, he pointed to his left leg prosthetic, as if saying there were something wrong with it.

I saw him several times after that, but we never spoke. When he saw me, his expression turned a bit unnatural. I didn’t take it to heart though, and each time, I smiled at him.

As the Spring Festival of 2011 approached, I decided to go home for New Year’s.

Before I left, I had a bit of a headache about where I would leave Ah Miao.

I didn’t want to bother my friends or colleagues, so I ended up deciding to leave it with a pet store.

I found a pet store near the school and carried Ah Miao over in its carrier. And then I met the angry man there.

He was a bit surprised to see me. At this point, we couldn’t help but introduce ourselves.

“My last name is Xiao, little moon Xiao.” I started speaking in Chinese, but then I became a bit uncertain since some ABCs (American-born Chinese) could speak Chinese but didn’t know to read it. Then I added in English, “You can call me Jodie.” (Note: ‘little’ and ‘moon’ are the characters used to write her last name)

“I know, little moon Xiao.” With a serious look, he extended his right hand to



me. In Chinese, he said, “Lin Weiqi, English name Virgil.”

I politely shook hands with him. His hands were very big, warm, strong. After we pulled back our hands, his expression warmed slightly. He said, “I have to apologize about last time, Jodie. I was really very irritable that day and I scared those kids. I’m sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.”

I smiled and lifted up my carrier to show him Ah Miao. “I’d like to check in this cat. If you give me a discount, I’ll forgive you.”

He couldn’t help laughing. His firm face suddenly broke into a smile, and his eyes filled with a gentle light. I suddenly felt my mood improve.

– My Mister Ostrich –

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## Side Story 1 (3)

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Side Story 1 How Much I Envy You (3/4)

*If you had a boyfriend, how could he handle your weird temperament?*

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I arrived back in China before the start of the Spring Festival. The break was two weeks long. I decided to fly to Beijing to visit my college professors first and get together with my old college classmates. Then I would return to E City.

When Xie Yi found out I'd be in Beijing, he called me out to meet with him. I told him that my schedule in Beijing was pretty packed, and that we could talk when I got back to E City. Xie Yi didn't try to force me past that.

I first became entangled with Xie Yi in Year 2, with the Spring Festival arts performance. Before then, I hadn't even known who he was.

At that point, he'd already been designated the most handsome boy at First High, and he was the object of countless crushes. But I really had no clue who he was.

We met for the first time in the teacher's office. When the teacher asked the two of us to perform a violin duet together, I immediately said, "There's no need to cause such trouble. I can withdraw from the performance and let this student perform his solo. I'm not used to performing together with someone else."

I swear, my words were completely genuine. What I said was what I meant, and there was no hidden meaning behind it. But oddly enough, both the teacher and Xie Yi thought that I was a bit unhappy about it. I figured that they must have misunderstood my last sentence.

And indeed, Xie Yi said, "Look here, (this) student, I'm also not used to performing with someone else. But more than that, I don't want to strip you of your right to perform. If you don't want to do a duet, then I'll withdraw."



I didn't want to get any more involved in these questions, so I said, "Forget it. Let's do a duet then. As long as you're willing to practice, I don't mind."

From then on, Xie Yi and I would practice together after school ended. But on the first day of practice, we fought.

My violin playing wasn't that good. If I were to go and take an exam at a professional institute, I'd definitely lose tons of points. But I just enjoyed playing the violin, with my own style, to express my heart. I didn't care about the fingering, the stance, or even the tempo. If I wanted to play faster, I would. If I wanted to play slower, I would. Who decided that there was only one way to play a song? So when Xie Yi pointed out all the parts where my tempo was wrong, I told him, "I think we're wasting time here, really. I don't want to perform. You can just perform your solo."

Later on, Xie Yi told me what he thought at the time. When he first heard me say that we were 'wasting time,' he simply didn't dare to believe his ears.

Xie Yi really was like an eagle, enjoying being able to fly freely through the sky. But at the same time, he was also like a peacock. A lot of people liked him, and he was very popular. No matter where he went, he was the focus of everyone's attentions. I guessed that there were countless girls who'd have loved to be able to perform a violin duet with him, but I said that we were just wasting time.

Xie Yi didn't agree to my dropping out of the performance. Instead, it seemed as if his fighting spirit was ignited by me. He transformed into a violin teacher, wanting to teach me from the basics, hoping that through his training, we'd be able to perform a stunning duet on stage for the audience. But in the end, we just ended up fighting each time.

Eventually, I ended up following along with his ideas. I still felt that we were wasting our time, but Xie Yi didn't seem to think so.

That performance was said to be a huge success. Many years later, when I was talking to Teacher Dai on the phone, she would start talking to me about the performance and how every year, the teachers still remembered it.

My memory of that day's events aren't very clear. What I remembered most was the expression on Gu Mingxi's face when I got backstage.



He wasn't as excited as the rest of the crowd. Others were applauding, but he just stood quietly at my violin case, waiting. There was just a hint of amazement and commendation in his eyes.

It was that tiny gleam in his eyes that reminded me of Arno.

After I changed my clothes and picked up my case, I asked him, "Gu Mingxi, what did you think of my performance?"

"It was good," he said. Then he stressed, "It was really good. I'm not just saying it."

I secretly smiled. I saw Pang Qian looking over from afar, and then I asked him, "I'm going out to the auditorium. What about you?"

His face reddened and he replied quietly, "I'm going to stay a little longer."

I nodded. "Okay. Thanks for watching my things. I'm going first."

After that performance, I thought that Xie Yi wouldn't ever want to talk to me again. I hadn't at all expected that it was just the start.

It was the first time in my life that a boy had so persistently and fervently pursued me with such youthful spirit.

From the very start, I clearly told Xie Yi that I didn't like him. But he seemed unable to accept my answer, or maybe, he just didn't believe me.

In June of Year 2, the Korea-Japan-hosted World Cup was getting into full force. One afternoon, Xie Yi called me out of class and confessed to me again.

"I'm sorry." With just those two words, I turned to head back into the classroom. Xie Yi grabbed my hand and pulled me out to the balcony.

He blusteringly asked me, "Xiao Yujing, do you like Gu Mingxi?"

I bit my lip and looked at him silently.

He said, "I knew you liked Gu Mingxi! When I invited you over to my house to watch the ball game, you were so adamant against going. Then when I said that Gu Mingxi would be coming, you suddenly agreed! Xiao Yujing, you sit next to Gu Mingxi all day long. Don't you know that he likes Crab?! The whole world knows that he likes Crab! But you don't know?! Wake up, won't you?! He won't like



you!”

I stared at him coldly. “Xie Yi, do you know you’re really stupid?” (Note: ‘Stupid’ or *wuliao* is one of the hardest words for me to translate sometimes. It’s such a common word, but doesn’t have a ‘standard’ translation. It can mean boring, senseless, or annoying... but also, sort of all of it)

He glared at me with resentment, his pretty eyes full of anger.

When I turned to leave, he grabbed onto me and pulled me into his arms.

Then he kissed me.

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I spent the Christmas of 2004 in Beijing. Xie Yi called me and said he and Pang Qian had gone to Z City to find Gu Mingxi.

“You didn’t find him, did you?” I asked.

He responded, “Mm,” and then told me what he’d heard about from Pang Qian.

Gu Mingxi quit school.

I’d never thought of that happening before.

“Gu Mingxi liked Crab for so many years, and only after he disappeared did she realize her own feelings.” Xie Yi’s mood seemed a bit down. “Jodie, if one day, I were to go missing, would you suddenly wake up and realize, ‘Oh, so I liked Xie Yi.’”

I really didn’t want to hurt him, but I had to tell the truth. “I wouldn’t.”

Xie Yi was quiet for a moment. Then he gave a laugh, as quiet as possible. “I knew it.”

Two months later, he sent me a message with an attached photo. It was him and an Asian girl having fun at Disneyland. Xie Yi said that she was his girlfriend.

But his love life didn’t go so smoothly. After just half a year, Xie Yi and his girlfriend broke up.

After that, he got another girlfriend. I was already in America by then. He flew



from the west coast to the east coast to see me, which caused everyone around me to misunderstand that he was my boyfriend.

I was stone-hearted enough that I never made any comments about Xie Yi's personal life.

I was in no position to. I was just an old friend.

All these years, I've been following the plan I set. I got into the top university in the nation. I picked a major that I liked. I chose an outstanding school to study abroad at. I didn't stray even a single step off the path. And I decided that I wouldn't date while I was in school.

It was already four years since I'd been back to China. My parents had come to live in New York for awhile as well. That Spring Festival, I met many relatives and friends I hadn't seen in a long time. They all said that I'd changed greatly. But actually, all I did was grow my hair out, learn to wear makeup, and pick out clothes.

I thought that they were all mistaken, thinking that the past me was very individual and solitary, unlike other girls my age. In truth, I wasn't at all different from everyone else. I was already 27 years old. If I hadn't learned to dress up, I'd probably have become the school weirdo.

Wu Min called me and said that our high school classmates were having a get together. Coincidentally, my family was also having a dinner, so I declined.

In high school, Wu Min and I didn't interact much. It wasn't until we both studied at Peking University that we became close. He was a very pure and simple person. When I left for America, we would still often chat online, already having become quite good friends.

Wu Min said that Gu Mingxi was also coming to the get together. No one had seen him in nearly eight years, and (Wu Min?) hoped that I could make it.

I thought about it, and then said okay and told him to send me the time and address.

After I hung up, I sat at the table for a long time, my mind wandering. So it had already been eight years.



The Gu Mingxi in my memories was still an 18 year old youth. We sat together at the desk near the window. The warm sun streamed in and made me sleepy, so I would lay down on my arms for a bit. I looked over my arm at him. The sun shined onto his shoulder, making the dust floating in the air visible. His thick, black hair glowed healthily in the light. I could see his slender neck, the white collar from his shirt, the tiny and fine hairs on his skin, and the beads of sweat rolling down the side of his face.

During the lunch break, the weather was really hot. The ceiling fan would turn, but the wind barely reached our back corner. Still, I felt so at ease.

Gu Mingxi never took an afternoon nap. Maybe it had to do with his physical condition. When everyone else was resting, he would still be working on practice problems.

I looked at his side profile, at the subtle expression on his face. His slightly pinched, dark brows. The gentle blinking of his eyes. His straight nose. And his thin lips.

Sometimes, sweat would slide down his cheek. When he felt it, he would rub his cheek against his shoulder and shake his sleeve.

He would unobtrusively look over at me, perhaps because he didn't want me to see his slightly awkward movements. So each time, I would close my eyes and pretend that I was asleep.

It was such a scene that was engraved into my mind. Every summer, I would remember that wet afternoon, clothes soaked in sweat and skin sticky from the heat.

I had once secretly watched a boy like this too, when I was 18 years old.

My phone suddenly rang. I answered it, and it was Lin Weiqi.

"Jodie, did I disturb you?" he asked.

"No. Did you need something?"

"Ah Miao's sick." Lin Weiqi's voice was very apologetic. "It might be because the sudden change in environment scared him a bit. I also fed him a different brand of food, and he seems to have come down with acute gastroenteritis."



“Is it serious?” I asked. I’d been raising Ah Miao for nearly two years and he’d never gotten very sick before.

“A bit of vomiting and diarrhea. I gave him some medicine, so it should be okay for now,” Lin Weiqi said. “I thought I should still call and let you know. I’m sorry for not taking better care of Ah Miao. But I’ll make sure he recovers well before you get back.”

I thought for a moment, and then I said, “Virgil, it’s okay. I’m sure that you’ve been taking good care of Ah Miao. If, and I’m saying if, he gets really sick or dies, you don’t have to feel bad. I won’t blame you.”

Lin Weiqi seemed a bit speechless. “Jodie, Ah Miao just has gastroenteritis.”

“Since you called me, that means that the situation is very dire. Isn’t that so?” I asked. “Virgil, you have to do your best to treat him. If Ah Miao dies, tell him something for me: I love him. But you have to use Chinese, since he doesn’t understand English anymore.”

Lin Wieqi started a moment. Then he said, “Jodie, do you have a boyfriend?”

“Eh?”

“If you had a boyfriend, how could he handle your weird temperament?”

“Do you have a girlfriend then?”

“No.”

I said, “Thank goodness. If you did, how could she handle your anger issues?”

Lin Weiqi, “...”

I was a bit unhappy, because Lin Weiqi said that I had a weird temperament.

I admit that I’m not the kind of person to get along with everyone. Even now, I wasn’t that close with any of my colleagues at work. When they went out for dinner or drinks, I rarely participated. Instead, I went home to my little place, hugged Ah Miao, and read.

Of course I would polish off my edges a bit. I didn’t want to be looked upon as a freak. In truth, I’ve always thought that I was a very ordinary female, just a bit socially inept.



A few days later, I attended the high school get together. I hadn't expected there to be so much traffic, and I ended up late.

I pushed open the door to the private room, and everyone inside was very lively. When the people at the table saw me, they all calmed down.

I smiled and said, "What's wrong, you don't recognize me?"

They stood up. The young and innocent faces I remembered had changed a bit. I saw Gu Mingxi, and he was wearing a beige shirt with black pants, looking mature and handsome. He was no longer the youth in a white collared shirt that I remembered. Standing together with the fashionable Pang Qian, they looked perfect for each other.

I also saw Xie Yi, still ever the image of a shining prince. At the dinner table, with all these other people around, we didn't speak much. I just watched as he downed glass after glass of red wine.

In the end, Xie Yi got drunk. I decided to send him home, and also to have a talk with him.

Outside the restaurant, Xie Yi wrapped his arms around a tree and started vomiting. Pang Qian considerately held a bottle of water for him. I turned around and saw Gu Mingxi not far away.

In the midst of the winter wind, he wore a grey coat, giving off a very calm air. When he caught my eye, he smiled slightly.

Taking advantage of Pang Qian standing with Xie Yi, I walked over to Gu Mingxi. The cold wind blew. We were standing right in front of each other, but I didn't know what to say.

Finally, he was the one to break the silence. He asked, "Are you planning on returning to China after you finish your doctorate?"

I shook my head. "Probably not. For the next ten years or so, I probably won't come back (to stay)."

He frowned and said, "I heard you and Wu Min talking earlier. Sorry, my English isn't very good anymore. But I seem to have heard... that you two were



talking about prosthetics?”

Regarding this topic, I usually used English to speak to Wu Min about it. I lifted my head and looked him in the eyes, not avoiding his gaze. Calmly, I responded, “Yes, my advisor and I are currently researching the topic of smart prosthetics, upper limbs in particular. Modern lower limb prosthetics have already made great progress, and their compensation for real limbs is very good. However, upper limb prosthetics are still far away from being a replacement for an arm.”

He smiled, not at all unhappy because of this sensitive topic. He said, “That’s how it is. Arms and legs have different purposes, so they’re hard to compare.”

“We’re making great progress in our research.” I explained it to him simply, “In the next few years, we might have a breakthrough. After implanting a chip into the human brain, the user will be able to perceive and control their prosthetic limb. Coupled with the nerves that still remain in their amputated limb, they’ll be able to have fuller control of the prosthetic. In the best case scenario, people will be able to rely on these upper limbs to completely take care of themselves.”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “Like a robot?”

I thought for a moment and then nodded. “That’s right, like a robot.”

Probably because he’d had some alcohol, a mischievous expression slipped onto his face. “When I was younger, I always wanted to have two mechanical arms. When I found out it couldn’t happen, I was depressed for a long time.”

“Nothing’s impossible now.” Curious about it, I said, “Gu Mingxi, if... I’m saying if, you needed some help on this front, you can give me a call.” Hearing my voice, I still couldn’t believe I’d just said those words. I continued, “Your condition is very suitable for electronic prosthetics. At first, you might find it hard to adapt to, but after you practice, you’ll be able to do a lot with the help of the prosthetics.”

He nodded. “I know. I looked into it before. Thank you, Xiao Yujing, but... I don’t plan on getting prosthetics.”

I didn’t ask him why, because I already knew the answer.

For Gu Mingxi, prosthetic arms may be a kind of burden. But I trust that the majority of physically disabled people will need our help. Especially young, poor,



and disabled children. I firmly believe that our research can change their fates.

I decided on this path in the winter of 2003. I was studying in Beijing when my dad called and said that Simba had died.

That lion prince that should have been running through the African savannah ended up dying in a zoo.

At the time, I thought of Gu Mingxi. Not that long before I found out about Simba, I was on the phone with him, through the number that Pang Qian had asked Wang Song to send out.

Gu Mingxi sounded very down and out on the phone. I knew that he must have hit some difficulties.

That was the time when I was thinking about studying abroad. Whatever field I continued with, there would be a large gap from other things. I wasn't studying these things lightly. Whatever path I took, I was planning on continuing down that path professionally and to continue researching it.

Because of Gu Mingxi and because of Simba, I set my path down in stone.

I changed the topic. "Speaking of, Gu Mingxi, I read your book."

He was taken aback. "They sell it in America too?"

"No, Xie Yi mailed me a copy," I said. "The artwork was good, but... Miss Antelope seemed to be missing some scenes."

Seeing Gu Mingxi's frozen expression, I knew that he didn't get my joke.

I could only change the topic again. "Did you guys keep that drum?"

Gu Mingxi froze again, and then he nodded. "Yeah, it's at Pang Qian's house. She's keeping it well."

I laughed and said, "That's good. Don't throw it away and don't gift it to anyone else."

He squinted at me. "That drum... Is there a story behind it?"

"When you and Pang Qian get married, I'll tell you," I said.

– My Mister Ostrich –



## Side Story 1 (4)

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Side Story 1 How Much I Envy You (4/4)

*Jodie, your new haircut's not bad. Short hair makes you look cuter.*

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After Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian parted ways with us, I sent Xie Yi home. After he got out of the taxi, he didn't stagger anymore and his eyes had cleared. He just grabbed my hand tightly and walked down the deserted road to his house.

I didn't struggle. The street lights cast two shadows behind us. As we walked, Xie Yi suddenly said, "Jodie, do you know how much I envy you?"

I looked at him beside me, but I didn't answer.

He suddenly laughed at himself and then turned to me, pulling me into his arms.

"How exactly was your heart formed?" Xie Yi held me tighter. His hoarse voice floated into my ear. "Where is it exactly that I fall short compared to him?"

"I've never thought of you in comparison to anyone else," I said. "Xie Yi, you should know. You're the one that everyone envies."

"Really?" He released me, and then looked at me with red eyes. "Then, do you envy me?"

"No." I honestly shook my head.

He couldn't help laughing. "You can't even bother to lie to me."

"No, I don't envy anyone," I said, looking him straight in the eyes.

He suddenly moved closer to me, forcing me to step back. He spoke slowly and clearly, "Do you dare to say that you don't envy her, even a little?"

Faced with this question, I could only remain silent.



I wondered how I could leave, when suddenly my phone rang. I picked it up. It was Lin Weiqi.

“Jodie, I have some good news and some bad news. Which one do you want to hear first?” His voice sounded tired, heavy. My heart tightened, and I said, “Bad news.”

“I have a fever,” he said. “Good news is that Ah Miao’s fine.”

I let out a sigh of relief. “Ah... Thank you.”

His voice was gentle when he responded, “You’re welcome. I’m a veterinarian, so this is my job. But... Why didn’t you say anything about my own condition?”

I suddenly laughed. “Did you go to see a doctor?”

“No, but I took some medicine.”

Firecrackers sounded in the distance. It was the last day of the Spring Festival holiday, so a lot of people were set off all the fireworks they still had. Lin Weiqi must have heard the sound, because he said, “Sounds lively. I miss the New Year’s in China. That’s how you celebrate a new year.”

I asked curiously, “You’ve spent New Year’s in China before?”

“My mom’s Vietnamese-Chinese and my dad’s Chinese-American mixed. My grandpa’s from Beijing, so I lived there for a long time.”

I laughed. “No wonder your Chinese is so good.”

When I saw Xie Yi’s cold expression, I immediately stopped the conversation. “Sorry, Virgil, I have to hang up. I’ll call you when I get back to New York. Thanks for taking care of my cat.”

After I hung up, I turned to Xie Yi. “I want to go home.”

He said, “I’ll send you.”

I was speechless. “I had to send you back because you drank too much. How can you send me back now?”

He was angered by me again. He suddenly asked, “Who were you on the phone with?”

I looked at him. “Xie Yi.”



A moment later, his hands curled into fists. “Let me apologize to you. I’m sorry. I feel a bit light-headed.”

He hugged me again, pressing my face to his chest. “I’m a bit light-headed, really. (Note: or perhaps ‘I’m out of my mind’ is more fitting) Jodie, I’m beyond saving.”

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After the holiday concluded, I returned to New York and went to pick up Ah Miao from Lin Weiqi.

He would occasionally give me a call and ask something about prosthetics. After we got to know each other a bit more, I found that he was a rather interesting person. He was very serious, and his face often gave a fierce impression. But when he smiled, he was very cute.

Lin Weiqi ran a pet shop and a small animal hospital. Because of my parents, I’ve always liked pets, so sometimes I would drop into his store to look at the puppies.

I would help him bathe the dogs. He taught me how to feed the little kittens with a syringe. I watched as Lin Weiqi treated the dogs. He was very patient and gentle. He would speak to the dogs as he helped to clean up their wounds.

I sat at his side and watched. I watched as he walked, his left leg a bit stiff. I watched the serious and quiet expression on his face. I licked my milk candy lollipop, a snack he bought for me and left in the shop. He said, “Girls love sweets.”

I could very clearly feel the slight change between Lin Weiqi and myself. But before anything could happen, I was sent to Germany to study for a year.

A year later, in the summer of 2012, I returned to New York and received Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian’s letter. They told me a lot of good news. Pang Qian got into her graduate program, Gu Mingxi got into college, and they were getting married.

I sat in front of laptop for a long time, before I finally sent a reply to Gu Mingxi.

I told him the story of Arno and his family’s drum. And then I said, “Mister Ostrich, Happy Marriage.”



Then I went to the hair salon and cut the hair that I'd been growing out for years, returning to my refreshing, short hair.

Every day, I went for a morning run. I took the same path and I went at the same time each day. One morning, as I was running, I turned a corner and then someone started running beside me.

I turned to look at him, surprised. "Virgil?"

I hadn't seen Lin Weiqi in a year, but he was looking good now. His dark brown hair bounced as he ran and his eyes glowed. He was wearing shorts, and I could see his slender and strong right leg, as well as the left leg prosthetic wearing a pair of running shoes.

He was running really well, keeping pace with me. He smiled at me. "Jodie, your new haircut's not bad. Short hair makes you look cuter."

"Thanks," I said. "Hey, let's have a race."

He raised his brow. "Sure."

After a bit, he fell behind. I heard him shout, "Jodie, hey! Xiao Yujing! Wait for me!"

I finally stopped, and put my hands on my waist, gasping for breath. Lin Weiqi slowly and leisurely came over. His posture and pace wasn't as good as when he started.

"What's wrong?" I asked him.

He was covered in sweat as he reached out a hand. "I can't keep going. You'll have to drag me."

He was also out of breath. I grabbed his hand and he shook his head. "The Chinese are especially attentive to the old, sick, disabled, and pregnant. But you... You're really too bad."

I glared at him. "Where did you see that?"

"When I... When I was in Beijing... Sitting... Sitting on the subway. And on the bus too, they wrote it everywhere." He clasped tightly to my hand and walked forward with me. "Goodness, after we run this far, how are we going to make it back? I'm afraid I won't be able to walk anymore."



I laughed. “I’ll piggyback you back!”

He turned to look at me, and the sun behind created a halo of gold around him. In the sun, his brown eyes looked the color of amber.

I suddenly felt that the joke was over and I wanted to let go of his hand, but he didn’t let go. Instead, he held on tighter.

“Jodie, I’m tired. Let’s find somewhere to have breakfast, okay?”

I could feel the sweat on his palm. Wet, sticky, and hot. I also heard the heart inside of my chest beating very fast.

On an ordinary morning, on an ordinary street corner, I held hands with a man, both of us soaked in sweat, looking at each other.

I raised my head up to the sky. The weather was really nice.

I smiled toward him and said, “Okay.”

– My Mister Ostrich –

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## Side Story 2

– My Mister Ostrich –

### Side Story 2 Handwritten Posters

*I just remembered something from when we were kids.*

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The year that Gu Haichuan was in kindergarten coincided with the Olympic Games. The kindergarten teacher handed out a sheet of A3 poster to all the kids. Their assignment was to, under their parents' guidance, create an Olympics welcoming (or introduction) poster. On the parents' open house day, they would display all the posters.

Pang Qian was extremely stressed out as she brought her son home. She couldn't help complain to Gu Mingxi, "Kindergarten students making welcoming posters? What kind of joke is that?! They can hardly read. Isn't this basically telling us to write and draw everything?"

Gu Mingxi smiled. "You can tell him to do it himself. He really likes to draw, so just let him play around or trace something."

(Note: GMX uses a pet name for his son—*jiu jiu*. It's like the sound of chirping, or I'd always thought of it as the sound of kissing. The author seems to call the kid *jiu jiu* a lot, but um, well I'll just refer to him as Baby Gu or Haichuan accordingly.)

"How can we do that? They're going to put on an exhibit!" Pang Qian jabbed at Gu Mingxi's waist with her elbow and giggled. "Our family has a great illustrator. It's your chance to make yourself known!"

On the weekend, Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian, and Haichuan sat around the dinner table to discuss what to do with that white sheet of paper.

Gu Mingxi asked his son, "What do you want to put on it?"

Haichuan plopped down on the table and thought for a moment. Then he said,



“Olympics welcoming.”

“I know it’s to welcome the Olympic.” Pang Qian sat next to him and asked, “Do you know what the Olympics are?”

Haichuan furrowed his little eyebrows and hesitatingly nodded his head. “It’s a competition where they run and swim and play sports.”

“Mm, that’s right. Then, what kind of competition do you like?” Pang Qian continued leading him. “There are a lot of different competitions at the Olympics. We can’t draw all of them, so we’ll draw the three that you like most, okay?”

“Okay.” Haichuan obediently nodded his head.

Gu Mingxi asked, “Which competitions do you like?”

Baby Gu thought for awhile, and then answered, “When the pretty girls do somersaults.”

Pang Qian asked, “What is it when the pretty girls do somersaults?”

Baby Gu motioned with his fingers to show her. “Just-just like we saw on TV before! The girl with the big eyes, standing on a piece of wood, doing somersaults! They didn’t even fall off!”

Gu Mingxi suddenly understood. “Oh, women’s balance beam gymnastics.”

Pang Qian asked, “What other competitions do you like? You only named one.”

Baby Gu scratched his head and said, “I like swimming and diving, and also the bouncing trampoline. And also when they play ball on the sand!”

Seems like they were all competitions where athletes wore skintight costumes, or swimsuits and bikinis...

Pang Qian reminded him, “Don’t I often bring you to the ping pong gym? Have you forgotten about ping pong?”

Baby Gu shook his head seriously and answered, “I don’t really like ping pong that much.”

His childish voice made Gu Mingxi laugh. “Why not?”

“Because... Because the girls playing ping pong aren’t that pretty,” Baby Gu



said. “I like the girl who does somersaults the best! She’s really pretty!”

Gu Mingxi asked, “Is the somersault girl prettier, or is your mom prettier?”

“Mm...” Baby Gu’s face turned red and he plopped onto Gu Mingxi’s body. Burying his face, he quietly looked at Pang Qian. “The somersault girl is prettier.”

Pang Qian smiled. “Gu Haichuan, you can do your poster on your own! Gu Minxgi, you can teach him, but don’t do it for him.”

After she finished speaking, she turned around and went to the study to work.

When it came to Baby Gu’s education, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian didn’t take the eagle dad – tiger mom approach, but they didn’t pamper their son either. They opted for the method where they let things run their course through guidance, accompaniment, encouragement, and occasionally criticism. (Note: eagle dad and tiger mom are basically parents who push their kids to their limit, often in ways modern society views as cruel; see [eagle dad](#) for more)

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi came to a consensus for teaching their son. Two people, of a single mind. Though they would occasionally come across disagreements or doubts with teaching methods, they would discuss those in private. For example, after Pang Qian said that Gu Mingxi couldn’t help Baby Gu with his poster, Gu Mingxi listened obediently and didn’t help at all.

Baby Gu’s written vocabulary wasn’t large, so Gu Mingxi found two sports-related songs and let him copy them onto the poster. The rest of the poster would be for drawings.

But Baby Gu was just a 6 year old child in the end. His handwriting was a mess, like something that was chewed up by a dog. When his characters were large, they were as large as a 5 cent coin, and when they were small, they were as small as melon seeds. After awhile, he finally painstakingly copied down one song. Then he lost his patience and started to pester Gu Mingxi.

“Daddy, help my draw and write.” He crawled onto Gu Mingxi’s legs and raised his little, pitiful face up. “I don’t want to write anymore.”

“No, I can’t. This is your homework.” Gu Mingxi comforted him, “After we finish copying the second song, we can draw, okay? I know that you like to draw. We’ll draw the pretty girls who do somersaults.”



“Daddy, you draw!” Baby Gu was very self-knowledgeable. “I don’t draw well. Daddy, help me draw!”

“But Mommy said that Daddy can’t help.” Gu Mingxi continued warmly and patiently, “You heard what Mommy said. Daddy will stay here with you and teach you how to write and draw. We’ll work hard together, okay?”

“No...” Baby Gu grimaced. “Daddy, I want to go out to play.”

“When you finish drawing, we can go out to play. You’re going to the square later to practice skating too.”

“I won’t finish the drawing!” Baby Gu looked like he was going to cry. “This paper is so big! So big! Daddy, I don’t want to draw!”

Gu Mingxi looked up at the clock. He stood up and said, “Daddy has to make lunch. Stay here and finish copying down the song, and then draw. Draw the girls who swim and somersault. I’ll be right back.”

Baby Gu hugged Gu Mingxi’s leg and wouldn’t let him walk away. “Daddy, help me draw...”

“Daddy’s going to make Louisiana chicken wings. Do you want to eat it?”

“...” Baby Gu released his hold and wiped at his eyes. “I want to eat four.”

“Deal.” Gu Mingxi bent over and knocked his son’s head with his forehead. This was his secret move with Baby Gu, just like how other fathers and sons would high five or hook pinkies.

When it was lunch time, Baby Gu happily ate four chicken wings. After he finished, he realized that he had to work on his poster again. The little guy couldn’t help himself and started crying. Gu Mingxi really felt conflicted seeing this, so he had Baby Gu go take a nap. The poor little Baby Gu went to sleep on his bed, his eyelashes laced with tears.

The large poster had already been turned into a mess by Baby Gu. Pang Qian felt that there was no way to save it, but Gu Mingxi said, “It’s okay. Just let him play with it. As long as he doesn’t rip it, it’s fine.”

Pang Qian picked up the rag-like poster and said helplessly, “If anyone found out that this was made by the son of the author of ‘Xiao Chuan,’ they’d probably



laugh themselves silly.”

“You were a bit harsh with him.” Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian sat together by their son’s bed and watched the sleeping boy. He had a head of fluffy, dark hair and looked very pretty. His facial contours looked more like Pang Qian’s, but his eyes were more like Gu Mingxi’s.

Gu Mingxi said to Pang Qian, “Adults were obviously supposed to help out with this assignment. The kids wouldn’t be able to do a good job by themselves. He doesn’t know anything about making a poster, so it was inevitable that it turned out like this.”

“Then what do we do?” Pang Qian asked.

Gu Mingxi said, “When he wakes up, tell him that you’ll let me help him, and then have him talk to me again.”

Pang Qian nodded, “Okay.”

Gu Mingxi looked at her somewhat gloomy face. Suddenly, he chuckled. Pang Qian looked at him strangely, “What are you laughing about?”

“I just remembered something from when we were kids,” he said. “It was during the Olympics then as well, and we had to do posters. Do you remember?”

Pang Qian was thought about it and then she laughed. “How could I forget.”

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It was May 1996, and Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi were in the fifth grade.

That summer, the Olympics were held in Atlanta, USA. The whole nation was passionately welcoming the Olympics, elementary school students included. The art teacher gave an assignment to make a handwritten poster with the theme of welcoming the Olympics. Due on Monday.

Faced with such an assignment, Pang Qian didn’t need to exert her brain at all. On Saturday afternoon, she flipped through the newspaper they subscribed to at home and found three articles about the Chinese team. Then she pulled out her notebook and found an article she’d previously written called ‘Our Olympics.’ She copied them neatly onto a piece of A3 paper. After spending a bit more than an hour copying it all down, Pang Qian brought the poster, still with lots of



empty space, over to Apt 502 to let Gu Mingxi help her draw some pictures and write in the title.

Gu Mingxi made a face. “You should draw a bit too. If I draw it all, the teacher will easily find out.”

Pang Qian didn’t think it was a problem. “It’s fine. My drawings are really ugly. Yours look nice. Just help me a bit. I’ll be back later to get it.”

Gu Mingxi mumbled to himself, “I haven’t even started on my own poster yet.”

“Aiyo, just help me out. I’ll treat you to a [doll popsicle](#) later.”

He raised his head to look at her. “I want cola.”

“Deal!” Pang Qian stood up. “I have to go home to watch TV. Tonight is the finale episode of ‘Instinct.’ Have you watched any of it?” (Note: Instinct is a 1994 Hong Kong drama)

Gu Mingxi shook his head. “My dad doesn’t let me watch TV.”

“Ekin Cheng’s Pau Man-lung is so handsome! And Poon Long-ching’s such a baddie!” Pang Qian ran through the story of the drama and then got up, pat off her bottom and said, “Hurry up and draw. I’m going back to watch TV.”

After Pang Qian left, Gu Mingxi started to look over the A3 paper she left behind. She was really lazy. She’d only written a little bit, and left all this space for him to fill in. Gu Mingxi sat at his desk and grabbed an illustrated book with his right foot. There were a lot of animals and plants inside that he could copy. Gu Mingxi flipped through the book with his toes and picked a few images to leave for Pang Qian to draw.

He earnestly helped her to fill in the title for the board. In all the blank spaces, he carefully made a pencil sketch for what he’d fill it in with. After two hours of preliminary work, he picked up the poster with his toes and looked at it with satisfaction. He got ready to add the colors.

He didn’t use watercolors because the effect wouldn’t be good. Gu Mingxi found some paints, a palette, and a brush. As he hummed, he filled in Pang Qian’s poster with color.

When he painted, he was always in a good mood. Moreover, this was for Pang



Qian. Gu Mingxi sat in his chair, his two feet busying themselves on the desk. The poster slowly turned colorful. The drawings and Pang Qian's articles were interlaced seamlessly.

But when the poster was nearly completed, a small accident occurred.

Gu Mingxi was picking up some paint on his brush with his right foot when he accidentally knocked into the cup of rinsing water next to his palette. He watched the cup tremble and anxiously raised his right foot to steady it, but in the end, he knocked the cup of water over.

The cup of muddy water crashed onto the table. Gu Mingxi's first reaction was to save Pang Qian's poster, but it was already too late. Most of the poster was already soaked, and slowly, his paintings and Pang Qian's writing were washed in the muddy water. The paper was a mess, and Gu Mingxi's mind went blank.

Li Han walked into his room after she heard the noise. She only saw that his desk was a mess as she helped him stand up and tidy his desk.

The water was running down his desk onto the floor. Gu Mingxi stared at the poster, completely dejected.

"What are you staring at? Hurry and go wash your feet," Li Han told him. "Look at your feet. Ah, what's this?"

She picked up the soaked paper as Gu Mingxi called out, "Don't throw it away!"

But he was too late. Li Han had already balled up the paper and thrown it into the trash.

Gu Mingxi looked at her, his head hanging in despair. "Mom, that was Pang Qian's homework."

Pang Qian was in tears from watching the finale of 'Instinct.' After dinner, she went over to Gu Mingxi's house to pick up her poster. She didn't forget to head downstairs to buy him a cola first.

With red eyes, she carried the cola to his room. Gu Mingxi looked at her a bit restlessly and asked, "Why did you cry?"

"Lam Ching-lit died. She burned to death. (crying sounds)" Pang Qian



explained the story of the finale as she continued to cry sadly. “I hate them. If I knew she was going to die, I wouldn’t have watched it. (crying sounds) Oh, your cola.”

She put the cola down on Gu Mingxi’s desk and sniffled. “Do you want me to help you open it?”

Gu Mingxi shook his head. How could he still dare to drink her cola. Quietly, he said, “You drink it. I don’t want it.”

“What’s wrong? You’re the one who said you wanted to drink it.” Pang Qian finally stopped her crying. She looked at his desk and then around his room. “Where’s my poster?”

Gu Mingxi, “...”

She continued asking, “Did you finish drawing it?”

“...”

“Gu Mingxi, can you hear what I’m saying?”

Gu Mingxi gathered up his courage and raised his head to look at her. He extended his right foot and pointed to the trash can next to his desk. “Pang Pang, I’m sorry. I got your poster dirty, I...”

Pang Qian rushed over and pulled out her broken poster from the trash. She looked at the text that she’d copied down. It was already illegible. Suddenly, she got mad. “Gu Mingxi, what did you do?!”

“It wasn’t on purpose.” Gu Mingxi stood next to her, rushing to explain. “My foot accidentally hit the cup of water I used to wash the brush. The cup fell and the water spilled. I...”

“I don’t care! It took me so long to copy it!” Pang Qian stared at him with red eyes. “I hate you! I’m going to ignore you from now on!”

As she said this, she tossed the ragged poster back into the trash. Then she turned away and ran out. Not two seconds later, she returned to snatch the cola from his desk. With a “hmp!” she ran off.

Pang Qian sat angrily in her room for half an hour.



In that time, she finished the bottle of cola. Then she recalled that poster. Aside from her text, it was mostly colorful drawings. And then her anger disappeared.

She sat on her bed and hugged her knees, thinking that she'd write out the article again tomorrow morning and have Gu Mingxi draw again.

"If you make the drawing so complicated, the teacher will know right away that I didn't draw it. What an idiot." Pang Qian picked up a comic book and started reading. She spoke out loud, "Alright, I forgive you. I'll treat you to another cola tomorrow."

On Sunday morning, Pang Qian slept until 8 o'clock. When she recalled that she still had to work on her poster, she got out of bed, whining. As she was washing her face and brushing her teeth, Jin Aihua told her, "There's something of yours on the table. Gu Mingxi's mom brought it over earlier."

Pang Qian thought it was odd. After she washed up, she headed to the living room and saw a roll of paper on the table.

She pulled off the rubber band and unrolled the paper. She was entirely dumbfounded.

It was a completed poster, filled up and colorful. On the top, there were the signature five Olympic rings, and on the side of it, there were white clouds and birds. The articles were scattered around, and each one had interesting illustrations accompanying them. Pang Qian looked carefully at the paragraphs of writing. That idiot even tried to copy her handwriting. His writing was originally very pretty, but he intentionally wrote carefully, but childishly. Pang Qian looked at the spot where the title and her name went: Thirst for Knowledge Elementary, Class 3, Pang Qian.

Pang Qian went over and knocked on the door to Apt 502. Li Han opened the door and told her quietly, "Gu Mingxi's still sleeping."

Pang Qian asked, "Auntie, do you know how late he was up until last night?"

"Probably around 4 in the morning. The sky was already lighting up," Li Han said. "Did you get the poster? Mingxi said he messed up yours so he should pay you back."



“I got it...” Pang Qian bit her lip. “Auntie, can I go in to see him?”

Li Han nodded. “He just fell asleep not long ago, so don’t be too loud.”

“Mm.”

Pang Qian walked to Gu Mingxi’s room. The curtains were drawn and he was fast asleep.

She looked at his desk and saw a pile of brushes, paints, and scratch paper. Clearly, he hadn’t cleaned up after he finished.

Pang Qian sat down by Gu Mingxi’s bed. He was covered with a thin blanket, his eyes closed, giving off a light snoring sound. Gu Mingxi was only wearing a white tank top, and his exposed shoulders and scars made Pang Qian’s heart ache.

She watched his sleeping face and curled her lips. Reaching out to ruffle his hair gently, she said quietly, “Why are you so stupid. It’s not even due today. Why did you stay up so late.”

When Gu Mingxi woke up, it was already noon. He hadn’t slept enough, but when he thought of his own poster that he’d yet to start, he could only bite the bullet and push off his blankets to get out of bed.

As he sat up, he saw a bottle of cola by his pillow and a note beneath it.

Gu Mingxi reached over with his leg and grabbed the paper. Pang Qian drew a grimace and wrote: Idiot, thank you. But in the future, don’t stay up all night, otherwise I’ll get angry!

Looking at her threatening words, Gu Mingxi couldn’t help laughing.

But then, in the next instant, he looked down at his bare shoulders, startled.

She’d once said that his scars were very scary. He wondered if she saw them this time.

Gu Mingxi didn’t want to frighten her.

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When Baby Gu woke up, Pang Qian gave him some good news. He could ask Daddy and Mommy to help him with his poster so he didn’t have to do it alone



anymore.

Baby Gu got up right away and ran to his dad's studio. He wanted Dad to help him draw the pretty girls who did somersaults. Gu Mingxi said, "Daddy can help you write. Let Mommy help you draw, okay?"

"No!" Baby Gu had already developed a sense of aesthetics. "Mommy's drawings are ugly!"

Gu Mingxi laughed out loud, and then he and Baby Gu walked over to the living room. The whole family sat together with the messy A3 posted in front of them. Gu Mingxi exhausted his abilities to save that poster, and finally had a delightful and completed poster.

After dinner, Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian, and Baby Gu went to the New Century Plaza to roller skate.

There were some tens of little kids practicing with the instructor. Pang Qian helped Baby Gu put on his protective gear and then he rushed off to join the instructor.

Four kids stood side by side and the instructor asked, "What's four plus three?"

The kids looked at him blankly, and then instructor said, "We'll start with the first one to answer correctly."

The kids scrambled to raise their hands, and the instructor pointed to one of the girls. "You can answer."

"Five!"

"Wrong."

One of the boys shouted, "Ten!"

"Wrong!"

Baby Gu rushed to raise his hand and the instructor called on him.

Pang Qian and Gu Mingxi looked at him expectantly.

With full confidence, Baby Gu answered, "Two!"

All the parents at the side chuckled and the instructor completely abandoned



the question.

He walked behind Baby Gu and had him squat down with his hands behind his back. Then the instructor pushed him forward.

“Slower, slower. Slowly open your legs. Open. Okay, pull back. Good.”

Baby Gu skated for a very long stretch under the instructor’s guidance. On his way back, the instructor said, “Do you see your mom and dad? Can you skate over to them on your own?”

Baby Gu lifted his head and saw Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian some tens of meters away. He nodded. “I can do it.”

“Okay, go on over!”

The instructor gave him a push, and the little boy with a blue helmet started sliding forward.

He rolled along with a stagger, but he wasn’t scared at all. He looked at his parents with shining eyes, and Pang Qian cheered out for him. Gu Mingxi was already crouched down on the ground.

He was a special kind of dad, unable to open his arms to pull his child in for a hug like other parents. But just like everyone else, he could use his warm chest to accept his baby.

Gu Haichuan smiled happily. He finally slid over to Gu Mingxi, and he spread out his little arms and landed onto Gu Mingxi’s body. He wrapped his hands around his dad’s neck and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

“Daddy, I can skate!” He giggled.

Gu Mingxi kissed him on the cheek as well. “You’re so awesome.”

At this moment, a girl wearing a red helmet slid over to them.

Baby Gu turned to her. When Gu Mingxi noticed, he asked, “Who’s this?”

“She’s Guodong,” Baby Gu whispered into Gu Mingxi’s ear. “Daddy, isn’t Guodong really pretty?” (Note: Don’t know if it’s a nickname, but ‘guodong’ means jelly)

“...” Gu Mingxi asked, “Didn’t you like Xiao Hudie?” (Note: ‘xiao hudie’ is little



butterfly)

Baby Gu responded seriously, “Now I think that Guodong is prettier than Xiao Hudie.”

Gu Mingxi: = =

“Guodong and I will go to the same elementary school,” Baby Gu said happily, his smile reaching his eyes.

Gu Mingxi asked, “Are you happy that you two will be going to the same school?”

“Yes!”

“Are you two good friends?”

“...” Baby Gu blinked his eyes and his head drooped. “I don’t think she knows who I am.”

Gu Mingxi laughed. “Then, go over and play with her. Look, Guodong skates very well.”

Baby Gu turned to look and nodded. “Mm, I want to play with her!”

He left Gu Mingxi and stumbled over. Guodong was already very good at skating, so Baby Gu had to use a lot of effort to catch up to her. Gu Mingxi stood up and looked at Baby Gu, grinning as he talked to Guodong. Then the two kids held hands and skated together.

Pang Qian had been listening to their conversation and she couldn’t help shake her head now. “I realized that our son’s rather fickle, completely unlike you. He sees a new one and likes a new one. His head’s just full of pretty girls. What do we do about it?!”

Gu Mingxi smiled, “Don’t worry. He’ll have his own life later.”

Right beside him, Pang Qian wrapped her arm around his waist and pulled him closer.

Gu Mingxi whispered to her ear, “One day, he’ll grow up and leave us to have his own life.”

She said, “Mm, just like you and me.”



Yes, just like every one of us.

– My Mister Ostrich –

Advertisement



# Epilogue

– My Mister Ostrich – N/A

## Epilogue

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It was the fourth year of his studies and Gu Mingxi was getting ready to head back into the work field.

His professional foundation was very solid, and since he was a lot older than his classmates, his artwork generally left a deeper impression. A few of the younger professors had even become pretty good friends with him. They often had lunch together and went to art exhibits together.

Gu Mingxi was working on a fine arts degree in painting. After graduation, people would probably work in an art studio or for the design department in a company. Some even accepted teaching jobs at primary schools and even high schools.

He was already 31 years old. While he'd continued making books, Gu Mingxi had never let go of his intent to return to teaching.

Currently, Gu Mingxi had already completed the fourth book of his 'Xiao Chuan' series. He was busy with school, and because he also had to spend time with his wife and son, he could only guarantee one book release a year. Still, his 'Xiao Chuan' series was selling very well. The series followed the young boy, Gu Xiaochuan, as he grew up, and the character was already a 13 year old boy. A lot of animation companies had already locked their eyes on the story. After Gu Mingxi discussed with Pang Qian and Jiang Qi, they picked out a strong company to sell the rights for an animated adaptation for the first three books in the 'Xiao Chuan' series.

During the past few years, he'd made quite a bit of money from selling the rights to his works. 'Mister Ostrich' had become very popular in the book, film, and animation markets. The only thing was that he never revealed his identity and appearance to the public. Though many people knew about his situation,



everyone was in agreement to keep that knowledge secret. To this day, Mister Ostrich was still a very mysterious person that fans scrambled to find out more about.

Gu Mingxi left all the money he earned in the care and management of Pang Qian. As an industry insider, Pang Qian completed this task beautifully. One day, she opened up their online account and looked at the startling number on the screen. Then she ran over to Gu Mingxi and hugged him, swaying back and forth.

“What’s going on?! Pang Pang?” Gu Mingxi asked in surprise.

Pang Qian closed her eyes and giggled foolishly. “I wanted to see what it felt like holding onto a money tree.” (Note: The phrase she uses refers to a legendary tree that drops coins when you shake it)

Gu Mingxi laughed and asked her, “Do you know what it feels like now?”

“It’s more wonderful than words can express!”

Because she’d given birth, Pang Qian took a gap year in her second year of studies. She was currently faced with interning in her third year of studies. Of course, for someone who’d already had work experience like herself, she wasn’t overly concerned with internships or future job prospects. She’d already chosen the company she would work for after graduating.

Over the past few years, Pang Qian had continued to stay in contact with Zou Liwen. She would be graduating soon, so she invited him out for a meal and expressed her interest in a job. Zou Liwen was still working in E City at Jialai Investments. While the company indeed had a vacancy, he felt that the salary wasn’t fitting of Pang Qian’s experience and academic background.

He hadn’t expected for Pang Qian to so gladly accept the offer. She said, “My son is still young, and my husband works too much. The important thing for me is to be able to spend more time with them for a few years. It’s better not to be too busy when I first return to the workplace. Team Leader, let me get myself readjusted first. After two years, when my son starts school, I’ll think about my plans again.”

Zou Liwen nodded his head. Then he said, “Actually, in the past two years, I’ve had some other thoughts.”



Pang Qian's eyes shined. Hesitatingly, she asked, "Team Leader, are you... planning on starting your own business?"

She'd already been working with him for nearly ten years. Although they were polar opposites, they'd developed a working rapport through the years. Zou Liwen looked at Pang Qian and asked, "If I were, would you come along and help?"

"Of course!" Pang Qian seemed to be more excited than him. "Team Leader, you should've done this a long time ago!"

Zou Liwen said, "But, if you follow me, I probably won't be able to match the salary that Jialai's currently offering."

Pang Qian shook her head. "That's okay. I'm not the breadwinner in our family anyway. What's important when it comes to work is that you enjoy it. You should face challenges and grow, and most importantly, you should have a good team leader."

Zou Liwen stared at Pang Qian for a long time, then he narrowed his eyes. "Pang Qian."

"Mm?"

"Have you ever considered not being my subordinate?"

Those words were really quite ambiguous. Pang Qian's head grew muddled. "T-t-team Leader, what do you mean by that? If I'm not your subordinate, what would I..."

"Business partners." Zou Liwen gave her a very clear-cut response as he crossed his legs and took a sip of his coffee. "Be my partner and venture into this together with me. Pang Qian, I hope you'll seriously consider it."

Pang Qian went home and told this story to Gu Mingxi, asking for his opinions. She originally thought that he would be against it because starting their own business would require a lot of work. Instead, Gu Mingxi actually showed his approval of the idea.

"When you're still young, you can push yourself a bit," he said. "Moreover, you've been working together with him for a long time. You must know pretty



clearly about his abilities and his contacts. Although I haven't talked to him much, I can tell that he's not an impulsive person. Without having made serious considerations, he wouldn't have put forth such a suggestion."

He leaned to Pang Qian and said quietly, "Most importantly, I think that you also want to give it a try."

He really understood her. Pang Qian raised her eyes to look at him. "Aren't you worried I'm going to lose all your hard-earned money?"

"Oh... I'll allow you to take half of it. It's fine if you use it all up." Gu Mingxi laughed. "Starting a business definitely has its share of risks. The economy changes so quickly. Even Zou Liwen can't predict it with a 100 percent guarantee. So I have to leave a backdoor for me and my son."

Pang Qian reached out and tapped his nose. "Coward."

He was still smiling, when he suddenly thought of something. He said, "I also have something to discuss with you."

"What is it?"

Gu Mingxi slowly told Pang Qian that he'd also settled on his job plans. Teacher Dai helped arrange for some school interviews. She'd made certain that they didn't mind his physical condition and would allow him to student-teach. There were two schools.

"One is Sunny Middle School. I would be helping to teach art for the junior high students. If I end up staying, the work will be relatively leisurely and the salary isn't bad. I'll have abundant time to work on my own projects as well."

He paused. Seeing that Pang Qian didn't respond, he continued. "The other is an elementary school. Wenzheng Elementary. Have you heard of it?"

Pang Qian thought for a moment. Surprised, she said, "It's a school for the children of migrant workers."

"That's right," Gu Mingxi nodded. "All the students there are kids of migrant workers. The principal there looked over my work history and saw that I'd previously taught in Sanya. They hoped that I could go to their school and not only teach art, but also English or math as well."



Pang Qian looked at him with wide eyes. Since she still hadn't responded, he asked, "Where do you think I should go to work?"

Seeing how careful his expression was, Pang Qian suddenly smiled. "Gu Mingxi, why are you playing dumb! You already decided which one you want to work at, didn't you?"

Gu Mingxi couldn't help smiling. "Mm, I already gave them a response."

"You definitely picked Wenzheng."

"Mm," he nodded. With a somewhat regretful tone, he said, "It's just that the work there will be a lot busier than at Sunny Elementary."

Pang Qian hugged him and said, "No matter what choice you make, I'll support you. I think that it's more fitting that you go to an elementary school rather than a middle school."

Gu Mingxi asked, "Why?"

Pang Qian replied righteously, "Junior high's full of 15 and 16 year old girls who have just started learning about love. Seeing a handsome teacher like you, how dreadful would that be! I know how risky that is. But elementary schools are full of little girls, so I won't have to worry."

Gu Mingxi was nearly in tears from laughing. "Says who? Haven't you seen Haichuan when he sees Wang Song's daughter? He immediately turns into a servant. He told me before that he really liked her and would marry her when he grew up."

Pang Qian stared in disbelief. "My goodness! He's only 2 years old!"

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After National Day, Gu Mingxi, Pang Qian, and their son returned to E City from Shanghai, ready to start their 'graduation fieldwork.' Pang Qian entered Jialai, still working under Zou Liwen. Gu Mingxi started teaching at Wenzheng Elementary, just an art teacher for now.

On the first day of class, Pang Qian helped him put on a long-sleeved navy shirt and a beige knit sweater. She carefully helped him button it up and then tidied up the hem and sleeves. Gu Mingxi looked at his reflection in the mirror and



asked, “How do I look?”

Pang Qian raised her thumb. “Handsome!”

The first class that Gu Mingxi taught was Grade 4’s Class 2. The head teacher brought him to the classroom and all the students stared, dumbfounded.

After the head teacher left, Gu Mingxi turned to face the blackboard. He slipped off his right slipper and raised his foot to the board. He easily picked up a piece of white chalk and wrote down three characters: Gu Mingxi.

He put down the chalk and turned back to face the class. Standing up straight, he smiled at the classroom of kids. “My name is Gu Mingxi. I’m 31 years old this year, and starting today, I’ll be your art teacher.”

Seeing how astonished the students still were, Gu Mingxi smiled even more brightly. “I’m sure you all find it kind of strange. You must be thinking that this Teacher Gu doesn’t even have arms, so how could he draw. But I really can draw, and I use my feet to do it, in just the same way that I wrote my name on the board. Oh, student.”

He looked at one of the male students and smiled. “You think I’m just talking big, don’t you? How about this. Why don’t you guys give me one class period to prove myself?”

A few of the students nodded slightly. Gradually, more students started nodding. One student even had the guts to shout out, “Okay then!”

Gu Mingxi stood at the lectern and bent over, flipping the page of his book with his mouth. “Then, let’s start class.”

When the class ended, a group of kids circled around him, scrambling to ask questions.

“Teacher Gu, how do you eat?”

Gu Mingxi answered seriously. “I use my feet. My feet are really amazing, and they can do a lot of things.”

“Can you put on your clothes too?”

“Yep.”



“Teacher Gu, why don’t you have any arms?”

“When I was little, I was a naughty kid. I climbed onto a pole and got shocked with electricity and lost my arms.”

“How old were you?”

“6 years old.”

The students started a commotion. One girl suddenly asked shyly, “Teacher Gu, do you have a girlfriend?”

Gu Mingxi smiled. “I’m already married and I have a 2 year-old son.”

“Wow...” A few girls started laughing and pushing each other. Gu Mingxi asked, “What are you laughing about?”

The girls stood around the first girl who’d asked the question and all started talking at once. “Lu Xiaofang was just saying how she thought Teacher Gu was so handsome!”

“When did I say that?!” Lu Xiaofang’s face turned red. One of the boys pursed his lips and then pulled on Lu Xiaofang’s sleeve. He said, “Hey, I’m going to buy snacks. Do you want to come?”

Lu Xiaofang found a way out and walked off with the boy. The group of girls chased after them, full of laughs and then split up into their own groups of twos and threes.

The class representative helped Gu Mingxi carry his tools back to the teacher’s office. As they walked down the corridor, Gu Mingxi turned and saw Lu Xiaofang and the boy carrying their purchases back.

The boy’s hands were empty. As they walked, he kicked along a pebble on the ground. Lu Xiaofang was carrying a bag of snacks, eating with pleasure.

Gu Mingxi looked at her a bit and then turned to head to the teacher’s office.

And like that, he worked as an ordinary art teacher at Wenzheng Elementary, with none of his colleagues or students aware that he was the famous Mister Ostrich. Working as the art teacher was pretty leisurely. After two months of teaching, Gu Mingxi started to teach English for Grade 2. He’d never taught students that young before, and he felt that it was really too interesting.



He was naturally well-liked. No matter what class he taught, his students all really liked him. At the end of the term, Teacher Gu, who only taught art class once a week, beat out the language, math, English, and other teachers as the favorite instructor for the six classes of Grade 4 and 5 students.

Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian both grew busy with work, so Gu Haichuan was taken care of by his (maternal) grandparents. Pang Qian tried not to work overtime. Then she would pick up Gu Mingxi from Wenzheng Elementary. They would have dinner at her parents' house before taking Baby Gu home.

One day, after dinner, Pang Qian was washing dishes in the kitchen. Gu Mingxi and Jin Aihua were playing with Baby Gu in the living room.

Pang Shuisheng slipped into the kitchen and asked Pang Qian quietly, "Old Gu gave me a call today."

Pang Qian suddenly became alert. She asked, "Mm? What did he say?"

"He asked if Haichuan was well, if you and Mingxi were well, if you'd settled your jobs. If Mingxi was having a hard time finding work, he could help to arrange something. He still has two years before he retires." Pang Shuisheng closed the door to the kitchen and lit a cigarette. "He wants to see Haichuan. He said the last time he saw him was when you came back over summer, so it's been several months."

Pang Qian lowered her head without a word.

Pang Shuisheng sighed. "Qian Qian, now that you and Mingxi are back for work, find some time to take him to his (paternal) grandpa."

Pang Qian thought for a moment and then said, "Okay, we'll visit. But Dad, I hope that you won't put any pressure on Gu Mingxi about this. The problems between him and his dad can't be resolved by just a few words from us. I know that Uncle Gu is older now and he wants to see his grandchild and he's concerned about Gu Mingxi and Haichuan. But where was he when Gu Mingxi needed a father the most?"

Pang Qian turned to look at Pang Shuisheng. "I'm definitely not going to try to convince Gu Mingxi to repair his relationship with his father, because I know that he doesn't hate Uncle Gu. It's just that he's unable to love him, respect him, or



understand him. It's not my business how sad Uncle Gu is now, or how poor Gu Ziyue's grades are, or how poor her temper is. The only thing I care about is whether or not Gu Mingxi is happy. You don't know how vexing it is every time we have dinner with Uncle Gu and his family. I don't think Gu Mingxi can be happy in the midst of all that. Gu Mingxi's relationship with them is beyond saving. Do we really have to force Gu Mingxi to be a 'filial son', to be such a 'magnanimous' person?"

Pang Shuisheng pondered on Pang Qian's words. He nodded and sighed. "I understand what you're saying. How about this. In the future, if Old Gu wants to see his grandson, we can invite him over during the day. We can all have a meal together and he can play with Haichuan. The two of us can even reminisce on the old days. And then you won't have to get bullied by their family."

Laughter suddenly sounded from the living room. Pang Qian and Pang Shuisheng walked out of the kitchen and saw Baby Gu running around the living room, his butt naked. Jin Aihua was chasing behind him with his pants.

"Rotton kid, hurry up and put your pants on! You'll get sick!" Jin Aihua yelled at Baby Gu.

Baby Gu ran over to hide behind Gu Mingxi. Suddenly, he was caught in Gu Mingxi's feet and propped onto the sofa.

Gu Mingxi grabbed onto Baby Gu and tickled him with his toes causing Baby Gu to squirm on the sofa, laughing. Then he got tired and climbed over to rest on top of Gu Mingxi.

"Daddy," he whined. "I want to pee."

"Mm?" When Gu Mingxi realized what he meant, it was already too late. He felt something warm and wet on his leg and then cried out, "Gu Haichuan!"

The bare butt Baby Gu seemed to be urinating quite happily. Then he used his hands and feet to get up. He shook his little birdie and then turned to Jin Aihua. "Grandma, I want to put my pants on."

Pang Qian and Pang Shiusheng nearly went mad from laughter.

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One summer day the next year, Gu Mingxi and Pang Qian graduated.



Gu Mingxi was formally hired by Wenzheng Elementary and became an official state-employed teacher.

Fudan's masters and postdoc graduation ceremony was held first. Pang Qian wore her master's cap and gown and received her diploma from the dean. She stood together with her peers and looked down from the stage. She saw her parents, her husband, and her son.

She looked over at them, and Baby Gu in Jin Aihua's arms waved at her. "Mommy!"

Pang Qian, who'd brought her son along to the graduation, had caught a bit of attention. But the real attention-grabbing event occurred two days later.

Gu Mingxi's graduation ceremony.

A 32 year old married man with a 2 year old son. He had no arms, but he was already signed on to teach at an elementary school. Fresh graduate, Gu Mingxi, had already become a legend at school.

On the evening before his graduation, Gu Mingxi returned to his dorm. He wanted to spend his final day as a student in the school.

When the sky just started to brighten, he woke up. Fu Qinfeng hadn't woken up yet so Gu Mingxi quietly got out of bed and went to wash up. He carefully shaved. When he combed his hair and brushed his teeth, he spent even more time than usual. When he was done, he smiled at himself in the mirror. Seeing the row of white teeth, he finally put away his rinse cup.

Fu Qinfeng helped him put on his graduation gown. The large gown draped over his body, obscuring his missing arms. It really made Gu Mingxi look like a tall and handsome man. Fu Qinfeng helped him put on his graduation cap as well. After tidying up the tassel, he smiled and said, "Old Gu, congratulations on graduating."

Xu Shuanghua had hurried back in order to attend Gu Mingxi's graduation ceremony. Because of him, even Pang Qian and Haichuan were allowed into the preparation hall.

Before Gu Mingxi headed to the stage, Pang Qian helped him neaten his cap and gown. She looked around at the young men and women, who had obviously



relaxed a great deal. Then she looked at the man in front of her. He wasn't that young. His eyes weren't so willful, and his expression not too stubborn. He smiled warmly, the corners of his eyes crinkling, marking the passage of time.

Pang Qian told Baby Gu in her arms, "Haichuan, what do you have to say to Daddy?"

Baby Gu cried out, "Daddy, congratulations on graduating!"

Gu Mingxi didn't have someone else accept his diploma for him. He held the diploma between his cheek and shoulder, smiling as he took a photo with the school president.

After the ceremony ended, everyone flocked outside the hall. Gu Mingxi's classmates quickly surrounded him, each one of them wanting a photo with him.

Some girls hugged him and cried, "Old Gu! I'll miss you!"

The boys kept saying, one after another, "Old Gu, when we go to visit E City, you have to come out for a drink with us!"

Gu Mingxi smiled. "No problem. When you guys come to E City, I'll act as your tour guide. I'll take you around and treat you to a meal! We'll stay out 'til we're drunk!"

"We want to go to your place! To eat your specialty dishes!"

"It's a deal!"

A lot of people attended Gu Mingxi's graduation ceremony. Afterwards, they waited outside the auditorium. Pang Shuisheng, Jin Aihua, Shark, Xiao Le, Tian Tian, Xu Shuanghua... Everyone took a photo together. Then the class president called for all the students to get a photo together and everyone circled around Gu Mingxi again. Pang Qian carried Baby Gu and watched them, and she realized that he'd been smiling the entire time. He was smiling so much that he couldn't close his lips.

After posing for a serious group photo, they started to take silly pictures. Pang Qian carried Baby Gu and walked over to them. Baby Gu raised his head and looked at the cap on Gu Mingxi's head. "Daddy, I want to wear your hat."

Pang Qian helped Gu Mingxi take off his hat and put it onto Baby Gu's head. It



was a bit big and dropped down to cover Baby Gu's eyes. All the girls on the side couldn't stop laughing.

Baby Gu laughed along. "I'm also a college student."

Just then, someone said, "Let's toss up our caps!"

"Ugh, you're so old fashioned!"

"This is called tradition!"

"Old Gu, come on then. Have your son help you throw it up!"

Pang Qian held onto Baby Gu and let him stand on his dad's shoulders. She told him to hold the cap in his hands. She looked over at Gu Mingxi and realized that he was looking at her as well. A pair of clear, dark eyes, full of happiness.

Gu Mingxi asked his son, "Are you ready?"

Baby Gu nodded his head.

The person taking photos said, "One, two, three!"

Countless caps flew into the air. With Pang Qian's help, Gu Haichuan's little hands went up and Gu Mingxi's graduation cap flew up into the sea of caps.

Above their heads was the June Shanghai sky. Clear, blue, with floating white clouds.

A school of birds flew past, flapping their wings with their might, headed into the distance.

This story hasn't ended.

Perhaps one day, you'll turn around and see Mister Ostrich and Miss Crab.

They exist right beside us, just as all the other people in this story.

So please, do not cry for them. And please, live a good life.

Each and every one of us should live our own romantic story.

– My Mister Ostrich – N/A